



**INDIGENOUS, YES:  
PARTICIPATORY DOCUMENTARY-MAKING REVISITED**  
(an Argentine case study)

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"This essay has a public. If you are reading (or hearing) this, you are part of its public. So first let me say: Welcome. Of course, you might stop reading (or leave the room), and someone else might start (or enter). Would the public of this essay therefore be different? Would it ever be possible to know anything about the public to which, I hope, you still belong? What is a public?"

Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 2002

#### WARNING

The profusion of quotations and end notes that the reader will find in the text are not minor information on the side, but gadgets aimed at disrupting the reading and, through such disruption, reclaiming attention to complexity. In other words: for this essay to make sense, the reader's attentive reading will be crucial.

#### ADDITIONAL WARNING

This essay refers to two existing documentaries. Although I cannot expect the reader to get into the trouble of obtaining copies of those documentaries and watching them prior to reading, I must point out that the reading experience would be enhanced by having seen them.

"...what I mainly want to clarify in this essay is a third sense of public: the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation-like the public of this essay. (Nice to have you with us, still.)"

Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 2002

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"It is often easier to say clearly what one is not than what one is"  
James Clifford, *Routes/Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, 1997

"I want to talk about the self's discovery of the other"  
Tzvetan Todorov, *La Conquista de América/El problema del otro*, 1987 (1992)<sup>1</sup>

"When a particular history is completed, we can all be clear and relaxed about it"  
Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, 1985

"It was not easy then, and it is not much easier now, to describe this work in  
terms of a particular academic subject"  
Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, 1985

## ► FOREWORD

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"A thesis represents a choice. Because it is a decision that leads us to channel our efforts into a research problem; it summarizes our academic career and projects the field of work that we have chosen for the future. (...) A thesis offers us the possibility of sketching our future strategy. (...) A thesis (...) is the possibility of closing one chapter and beginning another by recovering a certain way of understanding."

Editorial, *Tram(p)as de la comunicación y la cultura*, 2003

I got home yesterday and found the 2004 *Cinéma du Réel's*<sup>2</sup> catalogue in the mail. A copy had already arrived to *cruzdelsur* -the independent film production company I run in the city of Buenos Aires jointly with Vanessa Ragone since 1997- because one of our documentary productions, "Un tal Ragone/Deconstruyendo a pa" ("Someone called Ragone/Deconstructing dad", 2002), had been selected for the festival's special program, which this year was dedicated to Argentina. I had rushed through the catalogue to check that the documentary was adequately quoted, and that was all. But this morning, while giving it a closer look, I read a compelling statement on an issue I believe to be keynote for the field of Communication for Development, and which I intend to approach in this essay<sup>3</sup>.

The story goes as follows.

In 1997, Vanessa was granted seed financial support for a documentary she wanted to make. She contacted me and said she thought I had what it took to produce the project. I had only worked in a documentary crew once by then, as an assistant: sort of an experiment during a sabbatical. But after a short exploratory trip to the location where the documentary was to be shot, an indigenous community in the province of Misiones, I accepted her offer. The project led to a creative partnership and the setup of the above mentioned company, through which over the last eight years we have produced documentaries and educational TV campaigns, and will soon release our first feature film production for worldwide distribution.

The documentary that gave rise to *cruzdelsur*, *Ayvü-Porä/The beautiful words*, has come a long way. First presented to a small audience in Posadas, Misiones, in 1998, it was last featured as part of the "The Digital Bauhaus" exhibition held at the Museet for Samtidskunst in Roskilde, Denmark, in January 2004<sup>4</sup>.

I have too, I guess... come a long way. Graduated from university in Buenos Aires in 1991 in the field of education, I started shifting into communication as my main area of interest in 1995, and my professional work for the last eight years has combined experiences as a facilitator and consultant in the field of participatory communication and a media producer. I was not fully aware, when I started Malmö University's Master in Communication for Development in 2002, of what it would lead me to in terms of reconciling all these years of non-stop practice with the academic in me: a peculiar chance to look back -into previous studies and work experiences-, look around -into current debates and developments in the field and actual experiences of fellow colleagues in parts of Scandinavia, Asia, Africa and Latin America-, and look forward -into yet unexplored possibilities of tackling communication and media projects and contents that, paraphrasing Gérald Grunberg's expression in the 2004 *Cinéma du Réel's* catalogue, will attempt to "open our eyes, uncloud our vision and help us read the real world, rather than the world in which the televised evening news would have us believe".

Buenos Aires, march 27<sup>th</sup> 2004

## ► INTRODUCTION: FIELDWORK AS HOMEWORK, or GOING BACK –AND FORTH– IN TIME

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"The word investigate comes from the Latin in (e) vestigare (discover, inquire, question, follow traces)"  
Luis Barreras, Cintia Bugin, Marina Buschiazio, ¿"Cómo construir un plan de tesis?", 2003

"Going out into a cleared place of work presupposes specific practices of displacement and focused, disciplined attention"

James Clifford, *Routes/Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, 1997

"If the intention is to tell a story of the uselessness of stories, it will end up a thin story; if the intention is to tell a story of the significance of stories, it's a different story. Reflexivity is enabling if it is taken as the achievement of a new level of awareness, awareness of the meanings of trying as well as of failure"

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, 2001

### > SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE

Deciding what to work on was not easy. I started thinking about it in May 2003, while visiting Malmö University for the first time to attend a preparatory seminar aimed at establishing our<sup>5</sup> theses projects' plans. I then came up with too many ideas, which I only managed to narrow down by December. My first approach to my subject of choice, however, could not be developed without funding<sup>6</sup>.

I finally decided to base my fieldwork –which I redefined as homework, following Visweswaran (1994, as quoted by Clifford, 1997)– on two out of a series of four documentaries involving indigenous communities located in the North region of Argentina (the provinces of Misiones and Jujuy) which I produced between 1997 and 2003: the already mentioned *Ayvü-Porä/The beautiful words* (1998), and *Candabare/Late summer celebration* (2001)<sup>7</sup>.

Both films share elements from what could be termed both as "creative" and "participatory" documentary<sup>8</sup>. Also, inasmuch they deal with indigenous communities, they delve with the issue of cultural identities as a dimension of social action in a changing global context (Skelton & Allen, 1999); and they inscribe themselves in undergoing debates regarding the definition of documentary film, ethnographic film and indigenous media, being and not, at the same time, an experience in community media.

My (field)homework resulted in this essay<sup>9</sup>. Paraphrasing James Clifford, "This (...) is "work in progress" (...). This entry is marked, empowered and constrained, by previous work –my own, among others. (...) But the work I'm *going toward* does not so much build on my previous work as locate and displace it" (Clifford, 1997: 18). The conjugation of the essay and the video clip (see note 9) will hopefully provoke in the reader the curiosity to watch the documentaries<sup>10</sup>, as well as some sort of uneasiness as regards the issues I raise: the need to read again, write back, think twice. After all, this essay is meant to be, in itself, a communication for development... device.

This essay is also an investigation of examples, of which I believe "there is a striking paucity" (Skelton and Allen, 1999: 1) when it comes to actual practices in the field of communication for development, and a mapping exercise as well, intent at laying open and laying out the *actual practices* that led to the *concrete products*<sup>11</sup> on which I based my fieldwork, and at the same time superimposing theoretical debates onto professional practices in an attempt to contribute to bridge the gap between practice in the field and theoretical efforts in the academia.

Developing this essay implied "...the rigorous work of deconstructing in order to better reconstruct" (Mattelart and Neveu, 2002: 21), a work undertaken in the spirit of Nederveen Pieterse's words: "Reconstructions are ways ahead, contextual and time bound, forward options. In time they will yield another set of deconstructions and by then other reconstructions will emerge, which is the way of things" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: XII).

### > FROM TAMANDUÁ AND LIBERTADOR TO MALMÖ HÖGSKOLA, AND BACK... AS FROM MY LIVING-ROOM<sup>12</sup>

In adopting the notion of fieldwork as homework to turn it into a conceptual tool for the development of this essay, I drew on James Clifford's article "Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology" (Clifford, 1997). As from Clifford's approach to the definition of *field* – "My dictionary begins its long list of definitions for "field" with one about open spaces and another that specifies cleared space" (Clifford, 1997: 52)–, I resorted to my prior field experiences as producer (a producer that was an educator as well) and the audiovisual materials resulting from them. In this case, an open, cleared space –the field– would imply revising my own production field notes as well as papers, reports and/or articles written about both documentaries; reviews or critiques fed-back by festivals or published in the media; data gathered over time through experimental approaches to micro-audience responses by myself or third parties<sup>13</sup>; and the films themselves in terms not only of their contents but also of their funding, production and dissemination trajectories.

Still, the impossibility of returning to the field remained unsettling: "When one speaks of working in the field, or *going* into the field, one draws on mental images of a distinct place with an inside and an outside, reached by practices of physical movement" (Clifford, 1997: 54). For a while I had to struggle with the well established notion that "The legacy of the field in anthropology requires, at least, that "first hand" research involve extended face-to-face interactions with members of a community. Practices of displacement and encounter still play a defining role" (Clifford, 1997: 88/89), and I somehow felt that going back to the field to develop further concrete, factual –however qualitative– research with the people that were the subjects in question, the communities "documented", would have been the only valid, up to date<sup>14</sup> approach to working as from these documentaries.

In March 2004 I began my fieldwork as homework. Clifford's point of view acted as a mind-opener: "The definition of "home" is fundamentally at stake here" (Clifford, 1997: 84). What did I mean by homework? "'Homework" is a critical confrontation with the often invisible processes of learning (the French word *formation* is apt here) that shape us as subjects" (Clifford, 1997: 85). In terms of assessing those *often invisible processes* when it came to my own knowledge of communication for development, could "...the university itself be seen as a kind of fieldsite –a place of cultural juxtaposition, estrangement, rite of passage, a place of transit and learning?" (Clifford, 1997: 82).

Juxtaposition, estrangement, transit had been strong features of my experience of the Master in Communication for Development so far by the time I started writing this essay: an "overseas student"<sup>15</sup>, joining unknown colleagues from (other) remote locations of the world, first online via cyberspace, and then in person in Malmö, in a postmodern attempt to overcome Babel and learn about each other, with each other, from each other. And a question has resonated within me, all through the writing process, recalling feelings experienced in the field(s) and in the editing room(s): if I was overseas to my (foreign) colleagues and teachers, how far off from the understanding of any potential viewer of the documentaries –or for that matter, potential readers of this essay– were the Guaraní communities portrayed in *Ayüü-Porä* and *Candabare*, then? *What is a public?*

### > FOCUS

As I have already stated, in order to write this essay I drew on two preexisting media production experiences in which I took part at different times and in different places in Argentina –the province of Misiones between 1997 and 1998, and the province of Jujuy in 2001. Both were based on an overall consistent premise: the making of creative documentaries with –and about– indigenous communities through the implementation of a participatory

communication approach. Even if my first intention was to return to the field to resume those experiences and develop further research in terms of the communities' understanding and appraisal of the films as well as the utility of these for the advancement of their own cultural, social and political goals, the lack of funding to do so led me to focus instead on the actual documentaries and what me and others had written and/or informally researched about them in the past as my starting point.

I, the ComDev Master student, was therefore confronted –*a critical confrontation*– with the producer and the academic (writer) in me –*what one is not, what one is*– very much in the same way in which I had been while presenting both films to a ComDev “international” audience in 2003 –the university itself a kind of fieldsite, a place of cultural juxtaposition, estrangement, rite of passage, transit and learning. Context, content, form, language, translation, production, reception... these notions appeared as issues I should explore in writing as related to my actual experience of documentary-making. And so did the action-reflection processes through which I've learnt about communication as field practitioner and media *author & producer*<sup>16</sup> over the years.

Through the development of this essay it became evermore clear that “The relationship between theory and practice is uneven: theory tends to lag behind practice, behind innovations on the ground, and practice tends to lag behind theory (since policy makers and activists lack time for reflection)”. Time for reflection was something I had to struggle to find, while working full time (additionally, reflecting upon my practice and writing about it in a language other than my mother tongue, no matter how proficient my English might be at this stage, was far from easy). And how to relate to theory was in more than one way an elusive matter. Was I aiming at finding correspondence between existing theory and actual practice, or rather confronting one with the other? Was there anything to learn from my actual practice that was nowhere to be found in available existing theory? How deep should, could I go, in the context of a master thesis, in terms of searching for relevant literature, delving into theory, writing about practice? I believe, with Pieterse, that “A careful look at practice can generate new theory...” (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 2). The potential usefulness of this essay remains to be assessed, in that sense.

► **KEYWORDS** (Williams, 1985)

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One of the challenges I faced in writing this essay was linking the *actual practices* and *concrete products* analyzed and the theoretical concepts I deem to be related to them in a way somewhat relevant for the field of communication for development (understood as one of practice but also of research and theory-building), in which I intend to inscribe such practices and products.

How to map theory onto experience? How to constitute a conceptual "road map" as from existing work in the field that might enlighten further travels in terms of undertaking communicative –educational, participatory, critical, artistic, media- interventions to somehow challenge the present conditions of global development –or rather, of underdevelopment in the global arena?

Clifford wonders: "Is it possible to locate oneself historically, to tell a coherent global story, when historical reality is understood to be an unfinished series of encounters? What attitudes of tact, receptivity, and self-irony are conducive to nonreductive understandings? What are the conditions for serious translation between different routes in an interconnected but not homogeneous modernity?" (Clifford, 1997: 13).

Attitudes of tact, receptivity and self-irony<sup>17</sup>. Nonreductive understandings. Serious translation. Yes. But which, whose modernity? We must not forget that, as stated by Skelton and Allen, "Certainly for millions of people modernity seems to be characterized more by systematic exclusion and marginality rather than interconnectedness and the formation of new hybrid identities" (Skelton and Allen, 2000, p. 1-2).

According to Clifford, "Thinking historically is a process of locating oneself in space and time. And a location (...) is an itinerary rather than a bounded site –a series of encounters and translations" (Clifford, 1997: 11). To locate these empirical experience(s) –the production of the two documentaries- in space and time: Argentina, during the neoliberal decade of the nineties. To revise them as what they're part of, a professional itinerary: mine (but also that of others). To analyze them in the light of a theoretical web such that it will eventually allow me to translate the actual practices into conceptually productive materials.

A conceptual map<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, a road map, in the sense of a tool that could be of some concrete utility –as on-paper orientation regarding what cues to stay aware of- when it comes to beginning yet new journeys in the field. And a collage, as discussed by Clifford: "The purpose of my collage is not to blur, but rather ...to juxtapose, distinct forms of evocation and analysis. The method of collage asserts a relationship among heterogeneous elements in a meaningful ensemble. It brings its parts together while sustaining a tension among them". In pursuing Clifford's goal, I hope I will manage to challenge readers of this essay to "... engage with its parts in different ways, while allowing the pieces to interact in larger patterns of interference and complementarity. The strategy is not formal or aesthetic. A method of marking and crossing borders (...) is pursued..." (Clifford, 1997: 12).

But which are the essential theoretical points of reference I will depart from? What do I mean, in the context of the present discussion, when I refer to communication, development, participation, documentary? How are these terms to be understood, in this essay? I will draw on Raymond Williams's *Keywords* as a framework for my theoretical contextualization (always sustaining as a background, both as a reminder and as an interference, Paulo Freire's understanding of *the word and the world*<sup>19</sup>).

Williams is considered one of the main cultural critics of the second half of the 20th century. "His analyses relate literature, art, mass media, education, technology and the everyday methods of exchange with the social conditions of production. This is done both to inquire into the past and to propose guidelines for transformation today" (Delfino in Lóizaga, 1988). "For him, unlike so many academics, the medium of television was a crucial cultural form, as relevant

to education as the printed word" (Drummond, n/d, online)<sup>20</sup>.

In the "Introduction" to his *Keywords*, Williams describes the process through which he came to develop them. I will quote him rather extensively here, underlining those elements of his description which I bore in mind while researching literature for this essay, in terms of how to read theory.

"I have emphasized this process of the development of *Keywords* because it seems to me to indicate its dimension and purpose. It is not a dictionary or a glossary of a particular academic subject. It is not a series of footnotes to dictionary histories or definitions of a number of words. It is, rather, the record of an inquiry into a *vocabulary*: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English<sup>21</sup>, of the practices and institutions which we group as *culture* and *society*" (Williams, 1985, p. 15).

An inquiry into a vocabulary: a shared body of words and meanings in discussions of certain practices and institutions under a particular grouping.

"What I had then to do was (...) to analyse, as far as I could, some of the issues and problems that were there inside the vocabulary (...). I called these words *Keywords* in two connected senses: they are significant, binding words in certain activities and their interpretation; they are significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought (...) an active vocabulary –a way of recording, investigating and presenting problems of meaning in the area in which the meanings of *culture* and *society* have formed" (Williams, 1985, p. 15).

Significant, binding words in certain activities and their interpretation. Significant, indicative words in certain forms of thought. An active vocabulary. And problems of meaning set in the area in which the meanings have formed.

"I began to see this experience as a problem of vocabulary, in two senses: the available and developing meanings of known words, which needed to be set down; and the explicit but as often implicit connections which people were making, in what seemed to me, again and again, particular formations of meaning –ways not only of discussing but at another level of seeing many of our central experiences" (Williams, 1985, p. 15).

The explicit but as often implicit connections made in particular formations of meaning: ways of discussing and seeing experience.

"Earlier and later senses coexist, or become actual alternatives in which problems of contemporary belief and affiliation are contested" (Williams, 1985, p. 22).

Senses coexist or become alternatives in which problems are contested.

"This is not a neutral review of meanings. It is an exploration of the vocabulary of a crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical –subject to change as well as to continuity- if the millions of people in whom it is active are to see it as active: not a tradition to be learned, nor a consensus to be accepted, nor a set of meanings which, because it is 'our language', has a natural authority; but as shaping and reshaping, in real circumstances and from profoundly different and important points of view: a vocabulary to use, to find our own ways in, to change as we find it necessary to change it, as we go on making our own language and history" (Williams, 1985, p. 24/25).

Not a neutral review of meanings. A vocabulary inherited within historical and social conditions which has to be made conscious and critical. Shaping and reshaping in real circumstances and from profoundly different points of view. A vocabulary to use and to change as we find it necessary to.

"...the emphasis is not only on historical origins and developments but also on the present –present meanings, implications and relationships- as history. This recognizes (...) that there is indeed community between past and present, but also that community –that difficult word- is not the only possible description of these relations between past and present; that there are also radical change, discontinuity and conflict, and that all these are still at issue and are still occurring" (Williams, 1985, p. 23).

Community between past and present, but also radical change, discontinuity and conflict. At issue, and occurring.

"I do not share the optimism, or the theories which underlie it, of that popular kind of inter-war and surviving semantics which supposed that clarification of difficult words would help in the resolution of disputes conducted in their terms and often evidently confused by them" (Williams, 1985, p. 24).

Clarification of difficult words, however, does not solve disputes conducted in their terms.

## A WORD ABOUT THIS ESSAY'S KEYWORDS

Having introduced and insisted upon William's understanding of his *Keywords* and description of the process through which he came to develop them, I will as follows discuss my own tentative choice of keywords through which I intend to link practice and theory in my revision of *Ayvü-Porä* and *Candabare*. Such discussion remains limited. It is not my purpose here to provide a broad overview of each selected word in terms of academic literature reviewed, and therefore to attempt at theoretical clarification, but rather to expose the fact that they are all difficult words, subject to undergoing disputes in terms of meaning and scope and constantly dislocated by conflicts of interest starred by actors in the field of communication for development. I will of course do my best in every case to state and justify my preferred understanding of each of the words discussed as connected to the professional practice(s) I review in this essay. The words *communication* and *development*, as well as the terms *communication for development* (stressing *for* as a connective itself with more than one meaning) and *participatory communication*, will receive a rather extensive treatment, since they are constitutive of the con-textual field in which my writing will take place.

Words that I consider strictly connected to my understanding of, and positioning in, such field, although not core terms for the purposes of this discussion –such as education (as well as teaching, learning and knowledge), literacy (in particular, critical literacy and media literacy), culture (with emphasis on the notions of identity and borders), art, and qualitative research–, would require the development of a glossary, a project in itself that exceeds the scope of this essay.

Terms pertaining to the media lexicon –film, video, documentary, ethnographic film, indigenous media, community media, as well as production, content, audience, reception– will be discussed later on in the text to some extent, in a tighter (and also more blurred, being work still very much in progress...) connection with the *actual practices* and *concrete products* in question here.

I agree with Williams when he states that variations and confusions of meaning must be insisted upon, because they embody different experiences and readings of experience in active relationships and conflicts: "... the variations and confusions of meaning are not just faults in a system, or errors of feedback, or deficiencies of education. They are in many cases, in my terms, historical and contemporary substance. Indeed they have often, as variations, to be insisted upon, just because they embody different experiences and readings of experience, and this will continue to be true, in active relationships and conflicts, over and above the clarifying exercises of scholars or committees" (Williams, 1985, p. 24). And I will insist on variations and confusions of meaning regarding my keywords of choice throughout the essay, hoping to contribute *not resolution but perhaps, an extra edge of consciousness* (Williams, 1985, p. 24). May the reader consider my insistence not mere redundancy, but instead an artifact aimed at (re)calling his or her attention throughout the process of reading.

## > COMMUNICATION

"We have developed communications systems to permit man on earth to talk with man on the moon. Yet mother often cannot talk with daughter, father to son, black to white, labor with management or democracy with communism"

Hadley Read, date unknown

"The contemporary world, and maybe any human society, is incomprehensible if we do not study the relations between groups, societies and cultures. Relation is the key word, in all its multiple forms: contact, alliance, submission, conflict, extermination"  
Alejandro Grimson, *Interculturalidad y comunicación*, 2000

To me, communication came as the field to migrate to when education began to appear as a progressively fossilizing one. In 1995, four years after having graduated from university, I began to feel somehow frustrated by the digression between professional openings and my vocational concerns. In the midst of the neoliberal onslaught, the Argentine educational system was being decentralized, drained from resources which were already lacking, and in many ways dismantled. Anticipating a crisis (a personal one, in the context of a socioeconomic one in the making, as I found it increasingly difficult to make a decent living out of teaching), I decided to accept a job as assistant producer in a documentary crew: a very practical, hands-on kind of work, which required the ability to work in a group under stressing conditions and to communicate effectively. That job introduced me to the documentary format as a tool for communication, something I would return to in 1997. For reasons that back then were far from tangible for me, I felt that I might achieve through working in the development of media products of some sort what I felt I was not accomplishing through teaching at university or facilitating learning processes at NGOs: change.

But what do I mean by *communication*? Let me attempt to sum up a framework in which to situate this concept.

## INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP INTERACTION

In the sixties, Paul Watzlawick and his colleagues at the Mental Research Institute of Palo Alto, California, in the USA, postulated that "one cannot not communicate" (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967). In their book *Groups: theory and experience*, Rodney Napier and Matti Gershenfeld point out that "Every action, therefore, even silence, is a communication. What that means in day-to-day life is that we are actually aware of only a small part of our communication with others" (Napier and Gershenfeld, 1989: 21). Napier and Gershenfeld are interested in "the communication patterns that tend to develop in every group". According to them, "An awareness of these patterns is crucial for understanding the group and raising the level of effective interaction among group members" (Napier and Gershenfeld, 1989: XIV). Watzlawick et al also postulated that "communication has two aspects, content and relationship. The content aspect of a message conveys information of some sort or another (...). The relationship aspect (...) includes how the content aspect should be taken. It is the attempt of the communicator to define the relationship" (Napier and Gershenfeld, 1989: 22). Watzlawick referred to the relational aspect of interaction as "metacommunication": communication about communication.

Acknowledging the aspects involved in every communicative instance –content, relationship, as well as equal or differential power in communicative relationships, which Watzlawick defined as symmetrical or complementary– is crucial to the work of communication practitioners. The ability to facilitate interpersonal communication, as well as communication processes in group contexts, is of special relevance<sup>22</sup>.

## INTERACTION THROUGH DIFFERENCE, OR HOW TO OVERCOME BABEL

For the Argentine anthropologist Alejandro Grimson, "Communicative processes are a dimension of sociocultural processes" (Grimson, 2000: 17). He states that "Social studies have recovered a more productive etymology: to communicate is to 'make common', to make something common or public. In order to make common, it is assumed that there is something already in common, a shared sense of certain things. To understand a message, I must understand the code of my interlocutor" (Grimson, 2000: 16/17). In analyzing communication at an intercultural level, Grimson argues that "If to communicate is to make common, any communicative process simultaneously implies the existence and production of a shared code and of a difference" (Grimson, 2000: 55). According to him, "Diversity appears both as a difficulty and as a condition for communication" (Grimson, 2000: 125). Grimson poses questions relevant to my inquiry: "What occurs when two people or groups that produce different codes come together and interact? Do they

make something common, do they share signals, do they communicate? In an intercultural scene such as this, certain signifiers of each person or group generally emerge as notably different" (Grimson, 2000: 56). According to him, "No group has 'features' that characterize it, except in a specific situation of contrast" (Grimson, 2000: 57). "Thus the idea of a transparent society in which the increase in communication produces a struggle against entropy and disorder (...) is denied on a daily basis by misunderstandings and symbolic conflicts. It is not about simply falling into the easy idea of classifying situations as a 'lack of communication,' but to make the idea of communication more sophisticated by relating it to a theory of conflict. In order for two people or groups to dispute material and symbolic goods from different structures of meaning, it is also necessary for them to share certain principles" (Grimson, 2000: 63).

Grimson believes that "To acknowledge the other as someone different but equal, as diverse, as an actor in a dialogue, is more of a challenge than a verification" (Grimson, 2000: 125). His view can be connected to Alberto Melucci's, as quoted by Zygmunt Bauman regarding the concept of "limit": according to him, a limit "'stands for confinement, frontier, separation; it therefore also signifies recognition of the other, the different, the irreducible. The encounter with otherness is an experience that puts us to a test: from it is born the temptation to reduce difference by force, while it may equally generate the challenge of communication, as a constantly renewed endeavour'" (Alberto Melucci, *The Playing Self: Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 129, quoted in Bauman, 1999).

A critical approach to communication processes implies taking into account the fact that communication is a site for contestation. According to Jensen, "Neither the *concrete products* nor the *actual practices* of communication are the outcome of any simple causality" (Jensen, 2002: 61; the italics are mine, and I must call the reader's attention to the fact that I've already used the italicized Jensen's terms throughout the text). In his view, "In research as in other social practice, communication has its purposes and contexts, which must be teased out by researchers, as by other communicators" (Jensen, 2002: 240). For Jensen, and I agree, "illuminating the exercise of power and structural constraints and exploring the possibilities for change remain the central aims of a critical social-scientific approach to media and communication" (Jensen, 2002: 57).

## EXTREMES AND THE CHOICE OF DIRECTION

In Raymond Williams's discussion of the (key)word, the term in English can be traced back to the Latin *communicationem*, *communicare*, "*communis* - common: hence *communicate* - make common to many, impart" (Williams, 1985: 72). Williams states that "In controversy about communications systems and communication theory it is useful to recall the unresolved range of the original noun of action, represented at its extremes by *transmit*, a one-way process, and *share* (cf. *communion* and especially *communicant*), a common or mutual process. The intermediate senses -make common to many, and impart- can be read in either direction, and the choice of direction is often crucial. Hence the attempt to generalize the distinction in such contrasted phrases as *manipulative communication(s)* and *participatory communication(s)*" (Williams, 1985: 73).

Controversy: transmit, or share? An in-depth inquiry into what's involved in this choice of direction was undertaken by Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire early in the seventies. Freire envisioned education as the practice of freedom -*praxis*, reflection and action aimed at transforming the world- and dialogue as its key element.

### > DEVELOPMENT

"Development is the management of a promise -and what if the promise does not deliver?"  
Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, 2001

"The challenge facing development is to retrieve hope from the collapse of progress"  
Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, 2001

"Poverty cannot be tinkered with. Its root causes are related to inequitable power flows, ownership of resources and access to services. This may seem like an unfashionable statement –but if one ignores this reality, what one is left with are schemes built on the edifice of neutrality"

Pradip N. Thomas, "Communication and the Persistence of Poverty: The Need for a Return to Basics", 2002

In his discussion of the (key)word, Raymond Williams warns us: "...the pressure of what is often the unexamined idea of **development** can limit and confuse virtually any generalizing description of the current world economic order, and it is in analysis of the real practices subsumed by **development** that more specific recognitions are necessary and possible" (Williams, 1985: 104). The idea of development, often unexamined; and the importance of analyzing the real practices subsumed by development.

In his book *Development Theory. Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, Jan Nederveen Pieterse argues that "The classic aim of development, modernization or catching up with advanced countries, is in question". According to him, and I agree, "Several development decades have not measured up to expectations, especially in Africa and parts of Latin America", and "The foundation of development studies –that developing countries form a special case– has been undermined by the politics of structural adjustment and the universalist claims of neoclassical economics" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 1). In his article on "Culture and Development Theory", Peter Worsley argues that "The unintended consequences of an unregulated world economy and of a culturally and politically diverse and uneven world order go far beyond the economic-financial crises and crises of over-and under-production". According to Worsley, "the privatization of state enterprises and the removal of subsidies for basic commodities, notably food, resulted in immiseration for millions world-wide and huge increases in unemployment" (Skelton & Allen (eds.), 2000: 38).

The idea of development is in crisis, as made evident by decades of development practice. The question then becomes: "What, under the circumstances, is the meaning of world development?" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 47).

## IDEOLOGY, THEORY, POLICY

Is there such thing as a development theory? If so (in the sense of a predominant one), what's the ideology behind it? And how do theory and ideology influence policy when it comes to development?

In an article on the relation between the West and Africa, Kate White wonders: "What ideology lies behind the now huge body of literature written by 'developed' countries about 'undeveloped' ones? (Jacobson & Servaes, 1999: 19). In Pieterse's words, which is "...the ideological role of development theory –in setting agendas, framing priorities, building coalitions, justifying policies"? (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 3). According to Pieterse "The term 'development theory' suggests a coherence that in fact is hard to find. What we do find is a plethora of competing and successive currents, schools, paradigms, models and approaches, several of which claim to exclude one another" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 38). Additionally, we must be aware of the fact that "By any account, the different meanings of development relate to changing relations of power and hegemony" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 7).

According to White, "Development policy proposed by Western organizations involves ideological questions of power by representing dominant cultures' intention to help to "solve" problems not their own" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 25). Even if accurate in a way, her view could be considered overoptimistic, if not naïve: dominant cultures' intention to help? According to Pieterse, "Modernization policies in the past, and at present the application of liberal productivism to developing countries, first destroy existing social capital for the sake of achieving economic growth, and then by means of social policy seek to rebuild social tissue" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 127). No intention to help at all.

Once again, Raymond Williams analysis of the (key)word might provide further insight: "It is clear that, through these verbal tangles, an often generous idea of "*aid* to the developing countries" is confused with wholly ungenerous

practices of the cancellation of the identities of the others, by their definition as *underdeveloped* or *less developed*, and of imposed processes of development for a world market controlled by others" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 22). Waisboard agrees: in his view, development theory as a discourse that objectifies and validates a specific set of policies and/or practices denies the implicit assumption that there is one form of development as expressed in developed countries that underdeveloped societies need to replicate (Waisboard, 2000).

An additional question arises: Pieterse argues that "It is not really possible to generalize about development –the question is, whose development?" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 10).

### WHY STICK TO DEVELOPMENT?

I have summed up here what I identify as critical issues in the field of development related to my inquiry. Shortcomings, contradictions and pending answers have been stated. However, I still intend to inscribe this essay, and the *actual practices* and *concrete products* discussed in it, in the field of communication for development. As posed by Pieterse: "What is the point of declaring development a 'hoax' (Norberg-Hodge 1995) without proposing an alternative?" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 111).

In their introduction to *Culture and Global Change*, referring to contributors in the volume, Skelton & Allen state that "The majority (...) still work within what might be termed a 'development studies' framework in that they are unwilling to euphemise the experience of poverty by analyzing it as a form of discourse, and remain committed both to a structural linking of poverty with affluence, and to the need to engage in practical action to alleviate it" (Skelton & Allen (eds.), 2000: 2). In Marcia Rivera's words, "...it is possible to imagine other forms of society and to reach a progressively fair, equal and democratic order" (Rivera, 2000: 9). Working within the development framework rather than declaring it void, and critically acknowledging the need to further analyze and democratize the real practices in the context of debating which future we dare hope for humanity, are the approach to which I intend to remain committed.

### A REFLEXIVE, DEMOCRATIZED DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

Pieterse states that "We can probably define development as the organized intervention in collective affairs according to a standard of improvement". However, as already pointed out, "What constitutes improvement and what is appropriate intervention obviously vary according to class, culture, historical context and relations of power". In Pieterse's perspective, "Development theory is the negotiation of these issues", while "The strength and the weakness of development thinking is its policy-oriented character" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 3). He states that "Conventional developmentalism could be viewed as a form of 'symbolic violence': 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 167)". According to him, "Understanding development as a politics of difference is a step toward making development practice self-conscious with regard to its political and cultural bias, a step toward a practice of reflexive development" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 72).

In Pieterse's view, "Reflexivity (...) has two meanings –the self-referential character of development thinking, (...) layer upon layer of reflexive moves, each a reaction to and negotiation of previous development interventions, as an ongoing trial and error motion. And also the importance of subjectivities in the development process, the reactions of people on the ground to development plans, projects, outcomes, or people's reflexivity, which should be built into the development process" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 144).

Building the reactions of *people on the ground* into the development process, however, remains a challenge, since despite the fact that "it is now generally accepted that development efforts are more successful if the community participates" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 74), "While development thinking has become more participatory and insider-oriented, (...) development practice has not been democratized, particularly when it comes to macroeconomic management, so there

is a growing friction between development thinking and practice" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 146).

### > COMMUNICATION *for* DEVELOPMENT

*for*: preposition 1 showing destination, or progress towards. 2 showing what is or was aimed at. 3 showing eventual possession. 4 showing preparation. 5 showing purpose. 6 as if.

A.S. Hornby, *Oxford Student's Dictionary of Current English*, 1978

### TRICK OR TREAT?

In the opening acknowledgements of *Between Borders/Pedagogy and the politics of cultural studies*, referring to the nineties, editors Henry A. Giroux and Peter Mc Laren state that "During the last decade, the fields of cultural studies and critical pedagogy have been expanding within the United States and abroad. Within the university, both fields are developing in a diverse number of disciplines and are generating a boom industry in undergraduate and graduate courses. Moreover, critical pedagogy and cultural studies have found their way into publishers' books lists and a number of book series that have proliferated in the last decade. Of course, the proliferation of these two fields has not gone unproblematically. There is an enormous debate over the central categories, premises and practices that are being legitimated within various discourses that address these fields" (Giroux and Mc Laren, (eds.), 1994: IX and X).

Although their description of the state of affairs of the fields of cultural studies and critical pedagogy cannot be strictly matched with that of the field of communication for development, it could be said that some similarities apply. New graduate courses are being established in different places of the world. Books are being published. And above all, publications or activities<sup>23</sup> sponsored by competing institutional actors in the field of development (communication on *communication for development* being, paradoxically, their Trojan horse into the global "public opinion": a way of showing concern for the world's problems<sup>24</sup> despite the fact that actual communication for development areas and initiatives within those very same institutions remain ignored, considered of minor relevance, under-staffed and under-funded) are being developed and promoted more and more steadily.

However, in spite of the academic, publishing and PR (hyper)activity, the actual context of communication for development remains a critical one. James Deane discusses such context in detail in his background paper for the 9th United Nations Roundtable for Communication for Development held in Rome in 2004. Among other serious constraints, he mentions the following:

- "it is worth noting how difficult it is to discern a significant strategic response post-September 11 among donors and development actors, particularly in relation to building communication bridges and conversations across cultures. Global terrorism and the war on it are events where the communication community has a critically important role in making the world a less dangerous place. And yet, (...) there appears to be a general and puzzling trend towards disinvestment in such communication" (Deane, 2004: 5-6)
- "(...) the 2004 Communication for Development Roundtable takes place against a background where resources for communication activities continue to be difficult to mobilize, where strategic thinking and implementation of communication in development are going through a period of some confusion, including within several bilateral and multilateral agencies, and where development organizations continue to find it difficult to put people at the centre of the communication process" (Deane, 2004: 4).
- "...officials in (...) bilateral organizations, particularly in Europe, highlight a rapidly diminishing strategic engagement in communication with several reports of decreases in funding and policy confusion in relation to communication" (Deane, 2004: 21).
- "(...) communication strategies are designed as an afterthought (rather than integrated from the start into development strategies), are accorded too few resources and implemented with insufficiently trained personnel" (Deane, 2004: 7).
- "There is increasing evidence that communication programmes that tend to attract the most resources – particularly

those that promise to deliver concrete, quantifiable changes in individual behaviours over limited time frames – are too often unsustainable, insufficiently rooted in the cultures in which they operate, have limited lasting impact and run up against more fundamental social barriers to change" (Deane, 2004: 24).

- "The rapidly changing communication environments in some of the poorest countries and the growing importance of communication for alleviating poverty suggest that new ways of discussing these issues, with the central inclusion of mainstream media and affiliated organizations, is becoming increasingly urgent. Currently however, credible fora which can bring together mainstream, alternative and social advocacy organizations, as well as government and development decision-makers on these issues are in short supply" (Deane, 2004: 20)<sup>25</sup>.

Destination, or progress towards. What is or was aimed at. Eventual possession. (Preparation. Purpose.) As if.

### COEXISTING UNDERSTANDINGS OF COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT, OR HOW THEORY SOMETIMES (MIS)UNDERSTANDS REALITY

In his introduction to *Approaches to Development Communication*, prepared for UNESCO and published in 2002, Jan Servaes states: "All those involved in the analysis and application of communication for development –or what can broadly be termed "development communication"- would probably agree that in essence development communication is the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned. (...) This basic consensus on development communication has been interpreted and applied in different ways throughout the past century. Both at theory and research levels, as well as at the levels of policy and planning-making and implementation, divergent perspectives are on offer" (Servaes, I, 2002: 3).

On offer? Or rather, to return to William's *inquiry into a vocabulary*, in contest? Servaes' use of the expression "on offer"<sup>26</sup> does in a way, in my view, elide the fact that structural issues –"social, political and economic forces and unequal power structures" (Balit, 2004: 1)- are at stake in the choice of interpretation and course of action, given any communication for development initiative. In other words, to insist on what I've already discussed as related to William's definition of communication as a keyword, "the choice of direction" –transmit or share- "is often crucial".

In his report "Family tree of theories, methodologies and strategies in development communication", prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation and published in 2000, Silvio Waisbord states that "Since the 1950s, a diversity of theoretical and empirical traditions has converged in the field of development communication". According to him, "Such convergence produced a rich analytical vocabulary but also conceptual confusion. (...) [D]ifferent theories and practices that originated in different disciplines have existed and have been used simultaneously" (Waisbord, 2000). In Waisbord's account, "Since then, numerous studies have provided diverse definitions of development communication. Definitions reflected different scientific premises of researchers as well as interests and political agendas of a myriad of foundations and organizations in the development field (...) Beginning in the 1960s, the field of development communication split in two broad approaches: one that revised but largely continued the premises and goals of modernization and diffusion theories, and another that has championed a participatory view of communication in contrast to information-and behavior-centered theories. Both approaches have dominated the field (Servaes 1996)" (Waisbord, 2000).

But can it be said that the participatory view of communication really dominates the field of communication for development—or even a part of it- in any way? References to the fact that only lip-service is paid to participatory communication by national governments, international organizations or other instances are abundant<sup>27</sup>.

## > PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

### (HIS)TORIES

"The struggle is not simply against the external mechanisms of domination and containment, but against those internal mechanisms"

Sheila Rowbotham, *Dreams and dilemmas*, 1983

According to Jacobson & Servaes, "Within the field of development communication, the first wave of interest in participation occurred in connection with classical modernization theory during the post-World War II period. (...) Participation in this theory mainly referred to citizen participation in representative democratic processes, especially voting (...) During the 1970s, (...) [I]t eventually became clear that political participation was unlikely to develop where localities themselves did not have the capacity to participate in planning their own futures. As a result, a richer notion of participation was advanced to replace the earlier notion associated with representative party politics". Jacobson & Servaes state that "Dialogic processes have since assumed more importance" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 2). However, in their view, even if "This second wave has represented the concerns of field workers for a couple of decades, and this more participatory approach has earned growing interest from academicians, development agencies, and nongovernmental organizations involved in development work... this definition has never earned the widespread credence once held by modernization theory among academic theorists" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 3). For Jacobson & Servaes, from the 1980s onwards "The combination of geopolitical and intellectual trends, as well as other factors, has left the study of participation itself de-centered, along with the study of development generally" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 4).

On a differing note, according to Huesca, "Participatory approaches gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s and have evolved into a rich field standing in stark contrast to models and theories of the first development decades (Ascroft & Masilela 1994; Fraser & Restrepo -Estrada, 1998; Mato, 1999; White S., 1994)" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 141). In an article published in WACC in 1997, Rico Lie stated that "The field of participatory communication has faced a long struggle to become an accepted scientific field of study and research" (Lie, 1997). He characterized participatory communication as being "about progressive, positive societal change and as such it is not neutral as most sciences claim to be" (Lie, 1997). In agreement with Huesca's view, Lie noted that "Participatory communication exists in its own right". At the same time, inscribing himself in this field, he referred to the yet unmet "task of deepening our theories and developing workable frameworks, models and criteria for implementation, monitoring and evaluation" (Lie, 1997).

As it can be seen, these accounts of the development and state of affairs of the field in the past thirty years contradict each other<sup>28</sup>. Huesca seems to have a point when he states that "Despite its widespread use, (...) the concept of participatory communication is subject to loose interpretation that appears at best to be variable and contested and at worst misused and distorted" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 141-142). It is indeed contested territory that we are going through, in discussing this concept. And no matter how de-centered I might feel at this stage in my attempt to inscribe my object(s) of study in it, given the rather obvious "definitional fuzziness" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 164) surrounding the matter, as a practitioner "...acutely concerned with concrete applications of participatory communication in development" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 162), I will in what follows look closer into Huesca's and Lie's points of view.

### A LATIN AMERICAN(S)<sup>29</sup> PERSPECTIVE

"The concept of participatory communication for development is the most resilient and useful notion that has emerged from the challenges to the dominant paradigm of modernization"

Robert Huesca, "Tracing the History of Participatory Communication Approaches to Development", 2002

In his article, Huesca recalls that "Prior to the 1970s, almost all of Latin American communication development theory and practice was based on concepts and models imported from the United States and Europe and used in ways that were both incommensurable with and detrimental to the region's social context (Beltrán, 1975). (...) [A]t the "First Latin American Seminar on Participatory Communication" sponsored in 1978 by CIESPAL (Center for Advanced Studies and Research for Latin America), [i]nfluenced by dependency theory that was prevalent at the time, scholars there concluded that uses of mass media in development imposed the interests of dominant classes on the majority of marginalized people, resulting in the reinforcement, reproduction, and legitimation of social and material relations of production (O'Sullivan-Ryan & Kaplún, 1978). (...) The deconstruction of the dominant paradigm of development, then, was a (...) call for the invention of humane, egalitarian, and responsive communication theories and practices" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 143-146).

Huesca explains that "Embracing the notion of praxis—self-reflexive, theoretically guided practice—was an immediate and obvious outcome of the Latin American critique of the dominant paradigm" and that "The turn toward research praxis was a radical epistemological move that has been adopted and refined by scholars since then (e.g. Fals Borda, 1988; Rahman, 1993) (...) While this turn provided both a philosophical and epistemological framework for scholarship, it also provided a practical, commensurate method in the form of dialogue. Dialogic communication was held in stark contrast to information transmission models (...) (Beltran, 1980)" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 147-148). In Huesca's view, "Aside from its practical contribution, dialogue was promoted as an ethical communication choice within the development context" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 146-147-148).

However, he states, it was not the notion of *dialogue* but the notion of *process* that brought a more relevant change: "More than any other aspect of the Latin American critique, the observation that communication was frequently conceptualized in static, rather than process, terms constituted the greatest challenge for development practitioners (...) Rather than focusing on the constituent parts of communication, Latin American scholars introduced more fluid and elastic concepts that centered on how-meaning-comes-to-be in its definition. These more fluid and meaning-centered conceptualizations of communication emphasized co-presence, intersubjectivity, phenomenological "being in the world," and openness of interlocutors (Pasquali, 1963). This view introduced a sophisticated epistemology arguing that the understanding of social reality is produced between people, in material contexts, and in communication". According to him, "This fundamental criticism of static models of communication led to calls in development to abandon the "vertical" approaches of information transmission and to adopt "horizontal" projects emphasizing access, dialogue, and participation (Beltran, 1980)" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 149-150).

Huesca goes on to explain how "In the decades following the Latin American call for participatory approaches to development communication, a wide range of theoretical responses emerged. At one end of the participatory spectrum, scholars coming out of the behaviorist, mass media effects tradition acknowledged the critique and have incorporated participatory dimensions—albeit to a limited extent—into their research. On the other end of the spectrum, scholars critical of traditional development communication research embraced participation virtually as a utopian panacea for development. These distinct theoretical positions essentially mark ends on a continuum, where participation is conceptualized as either a means to an end, or as an end in and of itself" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 151). Once again: extremes, and the choice of direction.

## A MEANS TO AN END, OR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION AS A DEAD END

"Cultural action, participation, and action-reflection are some Freirean terms that have been adopted, adapted, used, abused, celebrated, or coopted by a variety of actors inclusive of activists, development specialists, pedagogists, and government officials"

Pradip N. Thomas, "Freirean futures: toward a further understanding of participatory communications", 2001

"The sloganeering of participation has had deep, negative effects on the practice of both critical pedagogy and

participatory communications"

Pradip N. Thomas, "Freirean futures: toward a further understanding of participatory communications", 2001

What happens when participatory communication is adopted as an element to enhance (to disguise?) traditional development practices? In Huesca's discussion of this matter, "...the most pernicious instances of instrumental uses of participation appear to be attached to large agencies connected to the state or to transnational regimes such as the U.S. Agency for International Development or the World Bank (Mato, 1999; White, K., 1999) (...) When put into practice, such uses of participatory communication exemplify, at best, passive collaboration, at worst, manipulative consultation done only to help advance a predetermined objective (Dudley, 1993; Díaz Bordenave, 1994)" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 153). In his book on development, Pieterse discusses the issue as well: "Participation is a deeply problematic notion; it is an improvement on top-down mobilization, but it remains paternalistic –unless the idea of participation is radically turned around, such that governments, international institutions or NGOs would be considered as participating in people's local development" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 88).

In Servaes & Arnst's article on principles of participatory communication research, a troubling but enlightening question regarding the matter is posed: "why is it that so much research has been conducted about participation in a nonparticipatory fashion?" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 108). Yes. Why? According to these authors, "Authentic participation directly addresses power and its distribution in society", and since "It touches the very core of power relationships (...), it *may not* sit well with those who favor the status quo and thus they *may* be expected to resist such efforts of reallocating more power to the people" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 116)<sup>30</sup>. They further add that "change *may* be resisted even in institutions that publicly acknowledge the need for alternative communication for development and take pride in their progressive stance" (Jacobson & Servaes (eds.), 1999: 117). The italics are mine. The reader might want to try replacing the "may not" for a "does not" and the "may be"(s) for "can be" and "is" respectively. Watch out for the emperor's new clothes.

## AN END IN ITSELF, OR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION AS DIALOGUE

"Being dialogic is not invading, not manipulating, not imposing orders. Being dialogic is pledging oneself to the constant transformation of reality"

Paulo Freire, quoted by Robert Huesca, "Tracing the History of Participatory Communication Approaches to Development", 2002

"So many of our peoples are wrested from the universe of the countryside on the path to the urban world, whose economic and informative rationality dissolves their knowledge and their moral, minimizing the value of their memory and their rituals. Given such uprooting, to speak of participating is to inextricably link the right to social and cultural recognition with the right to the expression of all of the sensibilities and narratives in which the political and cultural creativity of a country is captured"

Jesús Martín Barbero, "Televisión pública, televisión cultural: entre la desaparición y la reinención", date unknown

In an article on action research, Einsiedel refers to communication as dialogue as one of four levels of analysis which must be taken into account in order to begin to explore communication's "full potential as a tool for social transformation": communication as a social right ("...issues of information availability, information accessibility, ownership of information and knowledge, and knowledge validity. It surrounds such questions as knowledge for what, knowledge for whom, and whose knowledge?"); communications as social practice ("This requires a full understanding of the cultural context within which communications take place and the forms of communication practices within a community so that these might serve as a base for information sharing or knowledge dissemination"; communication as dialogue ("a process of exchange... a form of and a forum for participation"); and communication as the instrument for community ("the heightening sense of "community" by means of participation in the processes of reflection and action in defining problems and in the pursuit of common goals") (Einsiedel in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 105).

In another article included in the same book, Richards refers to "...a framework for communications research and teaching, which emphasizes communication as dialogue, communication as social practice, and communication as a social right" (Richards in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 8).

Huesca mentions that "Another area of scholarship that has focused on communication applications concerns participatory uses of media in development", which involves "the concepts of access (to communication resources), participation (in planning, decision-making, and production), and self-management (collective ownership<sup>31</sup> and policy-making) in media development (O'Sullivan- Ryan & Kaplún, 1978; Berrigan, 1981)". According to him, aspects of participatory media that have been studied as related to these concerns are "audience involvement in message creation (Mody, 1991; Nair & White, 1993a; 1993b; 1994b; Thomas, 1994), identity construction (Rodriguez, 1994), and institution building (Díaz Bordenave, 1985; Fadul, Lins da Silva & Santoro, 1982)" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 162).

Richards and Thomas draw on Freire's work when they argue that "...communication itself makes multiple meanings, and (...) participants must know how to comprehend, construct, and negotiate these diverse meanings in everyday life. Being aware of this necessity is an essential first step in promoting participatory communication, but a second is that participants as social actors are empowered not only to name their world but also to theorize its relationships (Huesca, 1996)" (Richards in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 5). According to Thomas, "The project of participatory communication is built on the assumption that individuals and communities share the right to speak their word, to name reality, and to act on it". In his view, "...the project of "understanding the other" (...) is crucial to the formation of a universal ethic of communication that forms the very basis for inclusive strategies of participatory communication" (Thomas in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 246).

Lie underlines the connection between participatory communication, empowerment and education, which I find of special relevance as related to further studying issues posed in this thesis. According to him, "Participatory communication is, in essence, an educational process in many different ways" (Lie, 1997).

I will not theoretically argue here in favor of the kind of participatory communication that I have just briefly characterized. I agree with Lie when he states that "We have devoted much of our attention to contrasting the new paradigm with the old ones" (Lie, 1997), and I would actually say *too much attention*. I will simply state that whenever I refer to "participatory" as related to the *concrete products* and *actual practices* I discuss in this essay, it is to this understanding of participatory communication that I subscribe.

## THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

"Do you think you can take over the universe and improve it?"

Lao Tsu, 6th century BC, quoted by Jan Nederveen Pieterse in *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, 2001

In his article on participatory communication, Thomas wonders: "How can solidarities be maintained in situations characterized by shifting populations, weak support structures, and the closure of public space? And what would be the basis for participatory communication in already enfeebled, fragile contexts plagued by ethnic, religious, nationalist conflicts?" (Thomas in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 249). In his view, "Participatory communication strategies need to anchor their practices in context. That context is incredibly varied. It consists of ever-changing developments in the field; variable forms of consciousness; political, social, and economic exigencies; and challenging interpretations of that reality. In the context of multiethnic, multireligious societies, dialogue across cultures will need to form the basis for the practice of participatory communication as a "pedagogy of hope"" (Thomas in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 251).

Particularly, he has a point when he states that "...participatory communication, in order to remain of "cutting-edge"

relevance, will have to dialogue with and reflect on emerging instances of critical theory, particularly that body of knowledge that throws light on the increasingly complex, variable relationships between consciousness, power, and social change" (Thomas in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 242). I have found it necessary, in order to develop this essay, to resort to materials originated in the fields of education, filmmaking, social sciences, anthropology and ethnography, among others.

There are a series of critical issues which must be tackled for the advancement of participatory communication as a field of practice, action-research and theory-building. Succinctly, as listed by Huesca (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 164-166): "lack of institutional support as the approach's long-range, time-consuming, and symbolic (conscientização, empowerment) dimensions do not conform to the evaluative criteria of many development bureaucracies"; "resistance from experts whose power is jeopardized"; "definitional fuzziness"; the need to "base development practices and analyses on definitions of communication that emphasize its dynamic process nature (...) distinguishing participatory communication from information transfer".

Huesca also notes that "Other conceptual components worthy of recovering and reinforcing are the ethical and political mandates that underpinned the Latin American call for participatory communication. (...) Strengthening the ethical and political grounds of participatory communication for development will function to enhance conceptual clarity and to reduce the likelihood that participatory projects will reproduce inegalitarian relationships" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 166-167). This remains of crucial relevance when it comes to the training of practitioners for work in the field, as well as of technicians for the development of projects and plans.

The development of overall and general criteria for monitoring and evaluation is a particularly critical aspect. I agree with Lie when he states that "one of the most important issues that participatory communication tries to stress is the uniqueness of every specific situation" and wonders: "If every situation is characterized by multiplicity how can we grasp the whole field?" (Lie 1997). In Lie's words: "if we want to develop general theory, we will have to find ways to grasp the complexity of diversity" (Lie 1997).

Participatory communication is indeed an educational process. Teaching and learning are involved, as well as qualitative evaluation methodologies and techniques, and necessarily, openness to interdisciplinary exploration of interrelated fields. Since practice is envisioned as an action-research process, its results are, must be, shared and discussed between all the participants involved. Sustained dialogue, discussion and collaborative reflection are aimed at facilitating change. Relevant solutions achieved must be systematically and thoroughly reviewed in order to provide a state of the art account of participatory communication practices, a documented awareness of the meanings of trying as well as of failure, and pave the way for further deepening of the field of practice and study.

## ► **SORRY, WHICH WAS THE POINT? WRITING AS DIGRESSION, OR THE PROBLEM OF MEANINGFULLY RELATING THEORY TO PRACTICE: THE WORD AND THE WORLD**

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"As in any serious discussion, words are sovereign"

Fernand Braudel, 1979, quoted in Mattelart, *Los Cultural Studies*, 2002

"...in the domain of socioeconomic structures, the most critical knowledge of reality, which we acquire through the unveiling of that reality, does not of itself alone effect a change in reality"

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of hope/Reliving Pedagogy of the oppressed*, 2003

If the reader is still with me, he or she might have begun to think that I am drifting. So, in having zoomed in(to) communication, development, communication for development and participatory communication as keywords, let me re-focus. On what? My point in writing this essay.

As already indicated above while discussing the relevance of remaining within the development framework, I actually believe, as a participatory communication practitioner, that there is such thing as hope<sup>32</sup>. And I strongly believe in the value of critically exposing and understanding the complex context(s) in which communication (for development) practices take place.

However, I urge the reader to bear in mind... *reality*. In particular, what is harsh about reality. And specifically the fact that even the most critical knowledge of reality does not of itself alone effect a change in reality.

In his *Pedagogy of hope*, Freire transcribed quotes from a UNICEF report that he termed as "simply astounding", and I find extremely illustrative in terms of the harshness of reality, painfully absurd when seen in black and white, and humanly difficult to... bear in mind: "If current tendencies are maintained, more than 100 million children will die of disease and malnutrition in the decade of the 1990s. The causes of these deaths can be counted on one's fingers. Nearly all will die of diseases that were rather familiar in other times in the industrialized nations. They will die parched with dehydration, suffocated by pneumonia, infected with tetanus or measles, or suffocated by whooping cough. These five very common diseases, all relatively easy and inexpensive to prevent or treat, will be responsible for more than two-thirds of infant deaths, and more than half of all infantile malnutrition, in the next decade. To put the problem in a global perspective: the additional costs, including a program to avoid the great majority of the deaths and infantile undernourishment in the coming years, ought to reach approximately 2.5 billion dollars a year by the end of the 1990s –about the same amount of money as American companies spend annually for cigarette advertising" (UNESCO, 1990, quoted in Freire, 2003: 95).

Words are not enough. Ways –concrete, immediate actions– must be found to change the world. And for that, practitioners and theorists should work in more closely interrelated collaboration.

## ► THE FIELD IN CONTEXT: ZOOMING IN(TO) ARGENTINA

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"What does this have to do with communication? Actually everything"  
Alfonso Gumucio-Dagron, "Vertical Minds versus Horizontal Cultures", 2002

"Beliefs, prejudices, and attitudes of any kind are rooted in material conditions"  
Jeanne Prinsloo, "Breaking step: South-African oppositional film and media education in transition", 2001

The two documentaries involving indigenous communities located in the North of Argentina which are the focus of this essay were produced between 1997 (*Ayvü-Porä/The beautiful words*, developed in Misiones) and 2001 (*Candabare/Late summer celebration*, developed in Jujuy). Both production crews –in which the director (Vanessa Ragone), the producer (me) and the editor (Mariela Yeregui) remained the same but the rest of the members changed, as did the funding sources– belonged to Buenos Aires, the country's capital city, approximately 1,100 km away from Misiones and 1,600 km away from Jujuy.

Before characterizing both documentaries in some detail, I will in this section summarize certain political, economic, social and cultural features of Argentina –my *home* country, and yet another level of this *fieldwork* as *homework*- which I consider necessary for the understanding of the broader context in which the documentaries were produced and made public.

### > POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION

"And because any discussion of communication and culture must inevitably raise the question of power, this too will be at the heart of our enquiry"  
David Morley and Kevin Robbins, *Spaces of identity*, 1995

In 1997, when we started with *Ayvü-Porä*, the country was governed by President Carlos Menem, from the Peronist Party, reelected for his second term in office in 1995. In 2001, it was governed by Fernando De la Rúa, from the Radical Party, who had been elected in 1999. Menem's two terms, and De la Rúa's unfinished one (he resigned in December 2001 at the outbreak of a deep crisis), were neoliberal times.

The relationship between neoliberalism and development has been analyzed by Pieterse: "Neoliberalism, in returning to neoclassical economics, eliminates the foundation of development economics: the notion that developing economies represent a 'special case'. According to the neoliberal view, there is no special case (...). Development in the sense of government intervention is anathema for it means market distortion. The central objective, economic growth, is to be achieved through structural reform, deregulation, liberalization, privatization –all of which are to roll back government and reduce market-distorting interventions, and in effect annul 'development'. (...) one of the conventional core meanings of 'development' is retained, i.e. economic growth, while the 'how to' and agency of development switches from state to market. Accordingly, neoliberalism is an anti-development perspective, not in terms of goals but in terms of means" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 6).

The overall effects of the neoliberal policies –as well as the sociocultural atmosphere that came with them- in the case of Argentina cannot be examined in detail here. Later on in this text I will give some indications of the impact of the neoliberal context prevailing nationwide on the production of both documentaries in terms of the availability –or not- of public and/or private funding and support, as well as in terms of the existence –or not- of an interest on indigenous-bound matters in the mass media. Suffice it here to note the following:

- "The Peronist party, under the leadership of Carlos S. Menem, implemented market reform programs at a pace never seen in other countries. Privatizations reached the most strategic and resisted sectors (like, for example, oil and

airlines)...” (Teichman 2001: 111–113 in Valdéz, 2004: 12).

– Menem’s administration “was widely characterized by widespread “corruption, intolerance, and power concentration” (Acuña, 1995: 347 in Valdéz, 2004: 12).

– President De la Rúa’s resignation amidst riots, in December 2001, led Argentina to default on “\$88 billion in debt, the largest sovereign debt default in history” (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26516.htm>)<sup>35</sup>.

– “(T)he economic crisis during 2001 and 2002 left 47.8% of the population living below the poverty line as of June 2004” (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26516.htm>).

Market reform and privatizations. An administration characterized by widespread corruption, intolerance, and power concentration. And an economic and social crisis in the making, which eventually –soon after we had finished *Candabare*– led the country to the largest sovereign debt default ever in modern history and left almost half of the population below the poverty line.

## A WORD ABOUT CENTER AND PERIPHERY

Argentina has a population of 38,4 millions (as of 2003 according to the source hereby quoted), and a surface area of 2,8 millions km<sup>2</sup> (World Development Indicators database, 2004). The autonomous city of Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina and its largest urban concentration and port, has a population of close to 3 million people living in a surface of approximately 200 km<sup>2</sup>, while the province of Buenos Aires, including the Greater Buenos Aires metropolitan area, has a population of almost 14 million people who live in a surface of approximately 300,000 km<sup>2</sup> (the province of Misiones has an estimated population of 850,000 people who live in a surface of approximately 30,000 km<sup>2</sup>, while the province of Jujuy has an estimated population of 600,000 people who live in a surface of approximately 53,000 km<sup>2</sup>). In other words, more than one third of the country’s total population is concentrated in approximately 11% of its total surface, namely its capital and surrounding metropolitan area.

At every level –economic, political, social, cultural– the city and the province of Buenos Aires remain the country’s center, with the other 22 provinces as its periphery. Center–periphery dynamics, expressed as differences, tensions and mutual expectations between production crews (which, we thought, were seen by the communities as belonging to the center) and indigenous communities (who, we felt, belonged to the periphery) became evident in many ways during the shooting of both documentaries<sup>36</sup>.

## > WHO ARE WE?: INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS AND THE NATION STATE

“...the contingent, imagined, historically constructed nature of communities and national identities should not make us lose sight of the very process of their constitution. This is a material process that involves defining the territories in which a state establishes itself as an authority to exercise legitimate violence and, in this framework, to define policies that involve and produce specific impacts on the daily lives of its inhabitants and citizens”

Alejandro Grimson, *Interculturalidad y comunicación*, 2000

“The nation state does not easily tolerate difference”

David Morley and Kevin Robbins, *Spaces of identity*, 1995

“...the west often civilizes alien groups by killing them”

Peter Mc Laren, “Freirean pedagogy and higher education”, 2001

“The homogenizing and reifying conceptualizations of groups or societies that are manifested in formulas such as “the Guaraní are...” or “Argentines are...” should become a thing of the past”

Alejandro Grimson, *Interculturalidad y comunicación*, 2000

“We first of all have to come to grips with our past”

Jan Servaes and Chris Verschooten, “Hybrid Interactions”, 2002

As characterized by the U.S. Department of State, "Argentines are a fusion of diverse national and ethnic groups, with descendants of Italian and Spanish immigrants predominant. Waves of immigrants from many European countries arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Syrian, Lebanese, and other Middle Eastern immigrants number about 500,000, mainly in urban areas (...). In recent years, there has been a substantial influx of immigrants from neighboring Latin American countries. The indigenous population, estimated at 700,000, is concentrated in the provinces of the north, northwest, and south (...)" (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26516.htm>).

Argentine researcher Alejandro Grimson provides a deep analysis and breakdown of the composition of the country's population as from a socio-cultural perspective and discusses the role of the Argentine nation state in the historical and actual situations of the indigenous peoples which are a part of it. According to Grimson, there is no such thing as a national culture: "...The allusion to 'national cultures' may refer more to official policies that at a certain time attempted to establish a set of cultural symbols of the country as their own, or to hegemonic forms that do little to describe multifaceted realities, even though they often produced profound effects on the population through school and the media" (Grimson, 2000: 26).

Grimson states that "The 'Argentines' eat, read, and do very different things. However, there exists a powerful social belief that the group of human beings that belong to a national state share a homogenous culture that would be considered the reason for the existence of that State. More than a verifiable reality, this pretension of cultural homogeneity actually constitutes an instrument for legitimizing the state's power. The human beings that we call the 'Argentine people' do not refer to a 'cultural identity.' In this way, the attempt to define a uniform, unchangeable 'Argentine identity' must be considered a political act". At the same time, Grimson draws attention to the fact that this does not mean that Argentines don't have anything in common. There are shared elements, but according to him "the shared elements are not to be found among supposed objective cultural features, but in the historic experiences and in the beliefs and practices that this experience has generated" (Grimson, 2000: 27).

Grimson's account of the historical circumstances that characterized the nation state's attitude towards indigenous peoples ever since 1880 will be useful to render explicit some of the dynamics involved in the trajectories<sup>37</sup> of the two documentaries under discussion here: "...The melting pot in Argentina refers to the mix of European 'races.' There is no place for the indigenous population or for blacks in the official tale of the nation. ... in Argentina, there was a process of de-ethnicization in which 'the nation was built by establishing itself as the big enemy of minorities.'" (Segato, 1998: 183) The role of the Argentine state was that of a 'machine that truly ironed out differences:' people who had traces of ethnicity 'were (...) pressured to move away from the categories of their origin in order to comfortably exercise their full citizenship.' (Segato, 1998: 183) In these terms, Argentine education would be based on the 'fear of the diverse' and on cultural supervision through official, diligent mechanisms: from the white uniform at schools and the prohibition of indigenous tongues to the mocking of accents that terrorized European migrants, both internal and from neighboring countries" (Grimson, 2000: 49).

The fear of the diverse.

Grimson explains how "...the way in which the national government put pressures on the nation to act in ethnic unity led to the perception that any differentiating or unique aspect was perceived as negative or, more directly, as invisible. As this project achieved success, ethnicity became a prohibited word in politics or at least a concept that was discouraged at the institutional level (...). The social conditions that led to this specific mode in which the power struggles were formulated are related to the characteristics of the National Organization Plan begun in 1880. As part of the 'Desert Conquest', the aboriginals were annihilated or dispersed along the borders, and through obligatory military service and public schools, a policy for 'Argentinizing' the enormous migratory mass was put into effect. This compulsion to assimilate, this de-ethnicization policy (Segato, 1997) was highly successful" (Grimson, 2000: 50-51).

Argentine education expert Adriana Puigros' account, consistent with Grimson's in many aspects, adds to this

characterization specifically in terms of the education system and its role: "In Argentina, the indigenous population was slaughtered during the 19th century. The mestizos were ignored by the dominant class who identified with everything European. Later, at the turn of the 19th century, immigrants arrived from Europe, and the governing class, despite its identification with European values, rejected the political culture, language, and religion of the immigrants, except Catholicism. The Latin American education system was modeled to reflect the aspirations of a particular sector of the population: male chauvinist, White, Catholic, racist, hostile to indigenous people, mestizos, and Jews. The system also tended to foster the intellect at the expense of productivity and pragmatism. Educational activities were focused at one level: the school. Once at school, each child and adult was obliged to leave behind his or her cultural context. School life was based on a myth that defined how society should be organized. This myth claimed that national unity is only possible if all differences are suppressed and rendered homogeneous. In Argentina, school custom abolished any kind of expression that deviated from the established norm. The education system developed a façade of homogeneity, but serious differences were hidden beneath the surface" (Puiggrós in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 232). This could explain the fact that "Argentina has a higher indigenous population than Brazil (in both relative and absolute terms)", but "while the native population in Brazil has a high level of visibility, in Argentina, people assume that there are no more Indians left" (Grimson, 2004)<sup>38</sup>.

However, Grimson notes that "In the past few decades, Argentina has changed in many aspects, and nowadays, that matrix of political culture seems to begin to articulate itself with other cultures more related to identity policies. In tandem with processes of transnationalization and also with a certain perception that traditional political schemes are no longer of use, (...) ethnicization processes of 'old communities' are sketched and indigenous groups that had been believed extinct reappear in the public scenario" (Grimson, 2000: 53). This was particularly the case with the communities portrayed in *Candabare*.

#### > THE ARGENTINE MEDIA LANDSCAPE

"As expressions of the collective imaginary, cinema and audiovisual arts matter (...) for their contribution to the cultural development of each community and the exchanges among the different cultures. At the same time, they depend on the capacity of these cultures to produce their own images, either through an audiovisual industry or through productive activities that are semi-artisan or episodic. Either alternative depends on the level of local development (in terms of the population, economy and society) that defines the dimension of each market and its possibilities for productive financing, as well as on the policy that each government implements in this area"

Octavio Getino, *Cine y televisión en América Latina*, 1998

"...issues around the politics of communication converge with the politics of space and place. Questions of communication are also about the nature and scope of community"

David Morley and Kevin Robbins, *Spaces of identity*, 1995

"...the identity of an individual, like that of a community, is constructed in increasingly decisive terms starting from the production, circulation and perception of images"

Octavio Getino, *Cine y televisión en América Latina*, 1998

As stated above, this essay intends to set the ground to explore the potential relevance of a certain kind of documentaries for the field of communication for development in terms of its social uses, based on an assessment of the production and dissemination trajectories of two specific documentaries, which serve as case studies. I do believe that in any qualitative study of communicative *concrete products* both production and reception must be studied in an interrelated way (see Aron, 1999). In this sense, it is important to provide here a brief account of the peculiarities that characterize the Argentine media landscape, in which to date finding slots for the broadcasting or theatrical release of independently produced<sup>39</sup> documentaries remains practically impossible.

I have discussed elsewhere neoliberalism's distinct impact on the structure of communications in Argentina: "In his

work 'The New Communications Industry in Argentina', Oscar Landi refers to the following factors to characterize the transformation of an era that occurred in that field in our country during the 1990s: financial globalization, mega-mergers of large international multimedia complexes, the privatization of open TV, the expansion of national multimedia firms, the deregulation of telephony, the penetration of transnational capital in the cinema exhibition business, and the agony of national, state-owned television (Landi, 2000/01)" (Enghel, 2001). Let's, as follows, get into some detail.

## TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THE ILLUSION OF PUBLIC SERVICE

"From a Latin American perspective, the public sphere has been historically confused with –or subsumed in– the state"  
Jesús Martín Barbero, "Televisión pública, televisión cultural: entre la desaparición y la reinención", date unknown

Argentine researcher Guillermo Mastrini agrees with Martin Barbero: "In almost all countries of Latin America (including our own), services that should be public are frequently associated with what is actually a government service. (...) the media connected to the state communication apparatus have generally become the government's organ for promoting itself (...) the idea of a public service is obliterated" (Mastrini, 2003). In the case of Argentina in particular, "The problem that such media sources present is that they never belonged to the State, but to the acting government. The public media sources in Argentina could practically be called government media sources. This characteristic is independent of the type of government: Radical, Peronist or military, (...) all assume that anything public is governmental" (Mastrini, 2003).

In practice, this means that citizens in Argentina are not even close to considering their right to actively participate in communication processes<sup>40</sup> as an issue that must be advocated. Which then again is in a way understandable in a context in which the right to make a decent living –to be able to provide oneself and one's own family food and shelter through dignified work, to begin with, instead of at best depending on state's allocations administered in such a way that they tend to foster political clientelism and social apathy– is constantly at stake for an enormous proportion of the population. And at the same time, a context in which wealthier people simply pay-per-view and have access to the available "international media diet" (Criticos in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 152).

## THE TV

"In Latin America –which is much closer to the United States than to Europe, although culturally it may be the opposite– television channels are born more as government channels than public ones and as soon as the number of local viewers increases, they are privatized. These channels thus begin to heavily depend on the North American industry not just in programming but in their production models"  
Jesús Martín Barbero, "Televisión pública, televisión cultural: entre la desaparición y la reinención", date unknown

Let's briefly look into a few characteristics of the Argentine TV system. As I've already stated, the State media have always belonged to the "acting government": "Argentine television is born in 1951, as part of the media expansion launched under Peronism" (Orozco, 2002: 25). "After the military coup on March 24, 1976, the entire communication apparatus was placed at the disposition of the armed forces" (Orozco, 2002: 37). Production remains less profitable than buying canned programs from abroad, mainly the US (Getino, 1998). Whatever production there is, it is developed mostly in Buenos Aires (Orozco, 2002). And fiction reigns: "Almost all commercialized television products (...) belong to the genre of fiction" (Getino, 1998: 201).

## FILM

What about filmmaking? Octavio Getino, as quoted in the opening of this section, refers to both "an audiovisual industry" and (or) "productive activities that are semi-artisan or episodal"<sup>41</sup> (Getino, 1998). Argentina's National Film Institute (INCAA) is somewhat caught in that watershed. At a national level "Through favorable loans and subsidies,

production is facilitated by the INCAA's Fund for Cinematographic Promotion" (Getino, 1998: 78). "Subsidies are granted to the producer in proportion to the level of box-office success of each movie, thus maintaining a criterion of 'rewarding for success'" (Getino, 1998: 79). As a consequence, there is an "...antagonism (...) between movies of the major multi-media groups, with all their resources and advertising, and independent productions or 'auteur films,' which lack these competitive advantages" (Getino, 1998: 82).

In practice, "government authorities from the film-making sector insist on a welfare-driven discourse although in practice, they tend to implement a policy that prioritizes and favors investment" (Enghel, 2001). And although a few documentaries –all of them independent productions but one, a local attempt by a major production company that tried to replicate the Michael Moore phenomenon with an Argentine newsman<sup>42</sup>- have seen a limited theatrical release in the last two years, this remains not a trend indicating change, but a sporadic occurrence.

## THE DOCUMENTARY GENRE

I have extensively discussed the situation of the documentary genre in Argentina as from both an economy of culture and a politics of memory framework elsewhere. I will recall a few keynotes here: "none of the four private television channels in the city of Buenos Aires currently has a program or timeslot dedicated to documentaries. This is also the case at the state television channel"; "...the genre of the documentary in Argentina today (...) does not receive differential treatment and does not have its own category in the policies, activities and ranking of priorities at the INCAA"; "workers who are dedicated to documentaries (...), left on their own and dependent on their efforts; are underestimated and made invisible, in a situation of apparent informality and clear marginalization" (Enghel, 2001).

## IS THERE AN AUDIENCE OUT THERE?

In his review of film production and markets in Argentina, Getino states that "Foreign films strongly dominate the market interest in terms of both spectators and box-office returns" (Getino, 1998: 74). The impact of the lack of cultural policies aimed at audience-building, as well as the economic aspects at stake when it comes to programming theatrical releases (again, the consequences of neoliberalism in the media and communications sector) must be taken into account when analyzing this fact. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that foreign fiction is all Argentine audiences want. Going to the movies remains an expensive activity, only undertaken by those who can afford it<sup>43</sup>. But what about those left with the TV as their main slot? "According to a study released by the COMFER in November 2001, more than 2/3 of the fictional programs shown on Buenos Aires television are produced by the US cultural industry. In terms of channels within the country, 75 percent of the contents they broadcast come from the Buenos Aires stations. It is truly a vicious circle" (Enghel, 2001). The same study "indicated that the majority of television viewers within Argentina believed that programming should be more diverse and that there was too much advertising, (...) that there should be more news programs, more cultural programs and more documentaries. (...) 82.3 percent of those surveyed stated that television channels were 'void' of cultural programming, documentaries, and news" (Enghel, 2001).

It was in this context that *Ayyü-Porä* and *Candabare* were produced, and it is in this context mostly that they were seen, by the micro-audiences that we managed to reach over time, through an array of dissemination efforts.

# MAP OF ARGENTINA



Based on a map copyrighted by Miguel Angel Forchi, cartographer.

## ► AYVÜ-PORÄ AND CANDABARE

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What have I said about the two documentaries so far, in the course of this essay? Let me sum up.

They involved indigenous communities located in the North region of Argentina. They are two out of a series of four documentaries involving indigenous communities that I produced between 1997 and 2003. They were produced between 1997 (*Ayvü-Porä*, developed in Misiones) and 2001 (*Candabare*, developed in Jujuy). Both production crews –in which the director, the producer (me) and the editor remained the same, but the rest of the members changed, as did the funding sources– belonged to Buenos Aires. Both films include elements from both what could be termed as “creative” and “participatory” documentary. Also, inasmuch they deal with indigenous communities, they delve with the issue of cultural identities as a dimension of social action in a changing global context (Skelton & Allen, 1999); and they inscribe themselves in undergoing debates regarding the definition of documentary film, ethnographic film and indigenous media, being *and* not, at the same time, an experience in community media. Let’s now get into further detail.

### AYVÜ-PORÄ/THE BEAUTIFUL WORDS

“One should never put himself where one isn’t nor should he speak for others”  
Serge Daney<sup>44</sup>

### CONTEXT

In an article I wrote in 1999 for the literary magazine NUSUD, I described the development of *Ayvü-Porä* as follows: “*Ayvü-Porä* came up as an original idea by moviemaker Vanessa Ragone. The purpose was to make a documentary in the Guaraní community of Tamanduá, in the province of Misiones, starting from a intercrossing between the production team’s view and the Guaraní view. It was to put forth an effort of inter-creation that would bring together the white and Guaraní views of the world through audiovisual communication. Our objectives were to start a conversation; to share as much as possible the discourse devices in question; to add up the two voices in order to tell a story; to identify points of contact or maybe to build bridges between the white and the Guaraní worlds by means of speech and images; to hold a dialogue”, (Enghel, 1999).

It should be noted that the article I am quoting was written at what I would describe as a time of... self-assurance. After a quite deserted presentation in Misiones, attended solely by a few members of the province’s Educational TV System despite wide coverage in the provincial daily newspaper, and having gotten over our very distressing, failed single attempt to reach Tamanduá to show the completed documentary to the community<sup>45</sup>, we were suddenly doing fine again. The documentary had been presented in Buenos Aires to an audience of over 400 people that received it warmly. The presentation had been preceded by extensive –and amicable– press coverage in national daily newspapers. The Guaraní chieftain’s granddaughter, who was in Buenos Aires at the moment of the presentation for personal reasons, attended it and seemed to be pleased with both the film and the audience’s response. Besides, since this remained at the time our one and only experience in this field so far, for a while we did not have to bear comparison.

### (SELF)PRESENTATION

When the documentary was finished, and soon after we first showed it in Posadas, Misiones, in order to present it in Buenos Aires we wrote a synopsis, put together the technical information and production crew list, and chose a leitmotiv image. Originally written in Spanish, the synopsis was then translated to English, and both versions have remained the same over the years.

## SYNOPSIS

A documentary in collaboration with the Guaraní indigenous community of Tamanduá, Misiones, Argentina. Directed by Vanessa Ragone.

*Aurora talks about the ancestral Guaraní medicine. Bonifacio recalls the arrival of his family to Tamanduá. Germino learns how to use the camera, and teaches the village's kids how to look through the viewfinder. Alcides plays cameraman in the recording of a ritual dance. Dionisio states his claims without having to walk.*

A crew travels to an indigenous Guaraní community in Tamanduá, province of Misiones, Argentina, and proposes to the Guaranies the making of a video in which the images are not only to be recorded by the director but also by the members of the community themselves. The purpose is to produce a documentary as a combination of the points of view of the crew and the way of seeing things of the Guaraní. "Ayyü-Porä/ The beautiful words" reunites two different gazes to show an experience of discovering the other, who is both so alike and so close to ourselves.

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Betacam PAL, colour, 48' - © cruzdelsur, 1998.

## PRODUCTION CREW

Director: Vanessa Ragone

Producer: Florencia Enghel

Editor: Mariela Yeregui

Assistant Director: Mónica D'Uva

Sound: Eduardo Vaisman

Camera operators: Miguel Angel Benítez, Germino Duarte,

Miguel Angel Ferreira, Vanessa Ragone, Luisina Rampoldi<sup>46</sup>

Still photograph: Comunidad de Tamanduá / Luis Timisky

Music: "Canto al río Uruguay", written by Ramón Ayala, original version sang by Liliana Herrero



## FUNDING

The project was started with a seed-money grant of ARS 15,000 (by then, the equivalent of USD 15,000) awarded to Vanessa Ragone by a private foundation called Fundación Antorchas, which for many years operated in Argentina as a mentor in the fields of the arts and sciences<sup>47</sup>. As soon as she had received the first allotment of the money, Vanessa got hold of me as producer, and also of Mónica D'Uva, with whom she had undertaken her first documentary-making field trip experience back in 1991 while still a film student, as assistant director; and she spent some of that first allotment in a miniDV camera, which would eventually become a key element of our work. It was mainly my responsibility, from the moment I accepted the offer to produce, to raise additional funding. Over time, we managed to secure an additional ARS 11,000 in cash from a sub-section of the National Ministry of Culture, and sustained in-kind support from the Misiones Educational TV System (which guaranteed transportation to and from the field), the Misiones Secretariat of Culture (which guaranteed food and lodging in the city of Posadas at every beginning and end of a field trip) and the Misiones Secretariat of Tourism (which guaranteed additional transportation for the main trip to the field, when we had the full crew with us). Additional support was provided by a few private companies (a mobile phone company that was starting operations in the province paid for the cost of photographic stock and developing in exchange for the right to use some of the photos for promotional purposes, and a supermarket chain allowed us a considerable donation of food for the community that we delivered in our main trip to the field)<sup>48</sup>. In all cases, the members of the crew agreed to do their share of the job for a minimum fee, so small that we thought of it more as a symbolic recognition of their participation than as actual payment<sup>49</sup>. Overall, although during the production process we only kept track of the incoming cash and consequent cash expenditures, once the editing was completed we evaluated

the full cost of the documentary, in-kind support included, in ARS/USD 35,000. In other words, a per minute cost of USD 730, at a time in which the average cost per minute for broadcast quality video was established at an international level in the USD 1,000/1,500 range (making quite explicit, I'd say, the fact that the crew had been... underpaid)<sup>50</sup>.

## PRODUCTION FIGURES

In the making of *Ayvu-Porä*, 40 hours of miniDV tapes were recorded, as well as 6 hours of additional sound in DAT tapes. Members of the community of all ages, and the professional photographer we invited to the main field trip, took an estimated 600 photographs. Three miniDV cameras of the same brand and model<sup>51</sup> were used: one in the first trip, two in the second one, and three in the main one. One of the cameras was ours, and the other two were rented.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

*Ayvu-Porä* was developed along four trips to the field. When we started, we anticipated that it would take us one year to complete the project.

As I've written elsewhere, it "was made on the basis of a triple audiovisual recording: the one made by the inhabitants of Tamandúá; the one made by the production team; and the recording of the recordings made by each of the other two cameras (or, as we liked to call it, a documenting of the documentary). All the time our main concern was that the Tamandúá people should hold the floor and be able to manage the camera as a discourse device".

The first trip, in July 1997, had the purpose of putting forward our proposal to the community. Director, assistant director and producer, the three of us young, white women<sup>52</sup>, were escorted by an anthropologist that knew the chieftain and had agreed to introduce us. We used one miniDV camera and two photographic cameras already then. I have described elsewhere our initial encounter with the chieftain, upon arrival to Tamandúá. I still find that description endearing, in the sense that without much reflection, I had already developed a sense of humor, a reflexive awareness regarding our way of approaching the *other*: "It was three of us arriving at the village for the first time. Agitation, hesitation, anxiety. Very slowly, we made our way to Dionisio Duarte, the chieftain. Greeting him loud and clear, perhaps like cowboys in Hollywood movies upon meeting the Apaches. Fiction, reality, and somewhat of an absurdity. Duarte looked at us as we approached him. With one gesture, he got someone to draw up a few chairs. With another gesture, he invited us to sit down in the shade. He looked at us again. He kept quiet for a moment that felt, if not eternal, considerably long. We sweated, tachycardiac, but waited in silence. At last he merely asked: "So?". And it was then that we presented the project to him" (Enghel, 1999). Duarte granted us permission to work in the community provided that we committed to give them (him) a copy of all the material produced. Re-reading my field records now, I realize that we only kept our promise to a certain extent: we did give to the community a full set of copies of every photo they had taken. And we left a VHS copy of the documentary with the Mayor of 25 de Mayo<sup>53</sup> for him to deliver it. But to date we haven't been able to confirm if the community ever received it and saw it.

During the first trip, we agreed with the community that we would use the school as the place where to stay, and also where to gather with them. It was a brick building, and it had electricity, which we would need to reload the cameras batteries and plug a TV set and a VCR<sup>54</sup>. Also, during that first trip we showed to the community the video that the director and the assistant director had developed with a group of filmmaking students back in 1991, portraying Tamandua among other indigenous communities, which perhaps made things easier at some level: we had been there before, and we had returned; it could be said on our behalf that we seemed to be interested in them. As far as we could tell, the community had at least one TV set, and also a parabolic antenna, which as they explained, allowed them to view the Brazilian TV. At the same time, there did not seem to be even one mirror in the whole community.

The second trip, in November 1997, was devoted to teaching a small group of young Guaraní men how to use the camera. My field notes corresponding to the training sessions are thorough, and although I cannot discuss them in

detail here, I would want to point out that they remain potentially valuable material in terms of returning to the field to develop further research, and/or developing some sort of a strategic handbook for communication for development practitioners. While we focused on sharing access to the use of the video camera, since we thought that the fact that we had only one video camera to make available to members of the community fell short in terms of what we described then as "allowing the tools of discourse", we decided to use photo cameras to a broader extent. It turned out to be a good idea. For one thing, it allowed children to participate. Also, the photo cameras were something that could be taken inside the houses (we were never invited to enter a house with our video camera, and none of the shooting done by members of the community on their own came from inside their homes either), even if this raised at the same time some sort of a paradox, as I've discussed elsewhere<sup>55</sup>. But most of all, when we returned for the third time and brought the developed photographs with us, we were able to set up an exhibition in the open, and further explore some issues related to viewing and being viewed (which are presented to some extent in the documentary itself), and also to communal property and the notion of authorship: who took which photos, in a process in which cameras were handed from one person to the other in random ways, remains a question<sup>56</sup>.

The third trip, in February 1998, was the main one: because the full crew was there, because we stayed longer, not leaving the community for a lapse of 10 days, and because the two "camera units", ours and the Guarani, worked together to produce the core of the material recorded. Most of what we did during that third trip in terms of a participatory communication approach, if not all<sup>57</sup>, can be seen in the documentary itself: the way in which we shot situations side by side with the Guarani cameramen, the way in which we showed and viewed the daily shots in gatherings with the community, the open air photo exhibition we set up, our discussions with key members from the community regarding the limitations of our work.

## CONTENT AND FORMAT

The editing process took place -without any of us being by then consciously aware of it, I believe- following Jean Rouch's premise that the editor "must never participate in the shooting" (Rouch, 1974: 41). The director wanted her friend and creative colleague Mariela Yeregui, who had also been on board the already mentioned 1991 field experience as a film student, to be the editor. Mariela was back then in Los Angeles, on a grant, specializing in *net art*. Therefore, as soon as we returned from the third trip, we made two sets of VHS copies of the master tapes: the director worked with one in Buenos Aires, and the editor worked with the other one in LA. Discussions proceeded on e-mail (in 1998 we were not yet using features such as online chats or FTP sharing of video files, but still...). When they thought they had agreed on a structure and the basic content and format premises, we flew the editor to Buenos Aires for a week, and the director and her literally locked themselves down in an editing room, while I secured food and beverages and transportation at late hours. I have written elsewhere that "The editing was made on the basis of a series of experimental certainties. Conscious that our reaching the community had lent special importance to the question of what was accessible to us and what wasn't, of where we were allowed to wander and where we were not, the decision was to navigate our way through the fringes of the material we had gathered and to organize a discourse from the margin rather than from the center. Both in the formal and the thematic treatment, through a constant crossing of views, through juxtaposing, mixing, fading and other visual effects, we attempted a reflection on the act of looking -at things and at ourselves- in the heart of the momentary encounter of two cultures with different narrative and visual traditions" (Engel, 1999). Although this may sound pretentious (it does to me, but it could be something about the style of writing that bothers me, and not what I was actually trying to say), we were once again, somewhat not consciously, following Rouch's dictates, himself drawing on Dziga Vertov's prior work and writings: "here too there is no recipe, but "Association (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, bracketing) of similar film pieces. Uninterrupted permutation of bits of images until the right ones fall together in a rhythmic order where chains of meaning coincide with chains of pictures" (A.B.C. of the Kinoks)" (Rouch, 1974: 41).

A few things were clear to us -and agreed upon, although it was still very much the director's call to make final decisions<sup>58</sup>- in terms of format and content, almost from the very beginning. First, that, since given the same types of

camera, and despite the fact that the director was herself by then quite an experimented camerawoman, we could not really see any formal differences between our "white" shots and the "indigenous" ones, we would avoid, in the editing, any indication of who had shot what, in an attempt to hopefully provoke potential audiences to wonder who had shot what and eventually realize that we were not differentiating "teacher" from "learner" or "expert" from "novice" because such a differentiation was irrelevant in terms of the visible outcomes. Second, that we would completely avoid the use of voice-over: there would be no paternalistic narration telling the audience what was happening on screen. Third, that sound would be treated not as an add-up but as a layer per se that would require sound editing once the main structure was in place<sup>59</sup>. Complexity tended to be the choice, always preferred to the risk of over-simplicity. Fourth, that the audiovisual narrative would have, to the best of our abilities, a circular structure: we hoped that a potential spectator would be able to start watching the documentary at any point, and still understand it after having seen the whole piece, although not from the actual beginning. Complexity again, in this case regarding an expectation, or hope, of an audience that could, would, engage in active meaning-making. We also agreed on the fact that the documentary should have a standard TV duration of an hour –save up to 12' for commercial breaks- and "broadcast quality", which back then implied mostly a Betacam master tape and the proper sound mix<sup>60</sup>.

Finally, once the editing process was almost through, and after heated discussions in which we oscillated between the value of difficulties and the need for understanding but mostly we did not want to surrender what we considered was our ethical commitment to respect for differences by forcing a translation, we decided that there would be no subtitling whatsoever to assist viewers with the difficult Spanish spoken by the chieftain at several moments of the documentary<sup>61</sup>. The discussion<sup>62</sup> was settled with the following warning to potential viewers at the very beginning of the film: "In those cases where the chieftain talked with us in a hybrid language, a mixture of Guaraní and Spanish, translating his words would have meant to interpret them. We have decided to refrain from such an interpretation. Therefore, the spectator's attentive listening will be crucial".

## COMMUNICATION AS SUPPORT

"From the moment a stranger appears in someone's field bearing government authority, a theodolite, and some stakes, and drives the stakes into that ground, a long chain-reaction of communication has been launched"  
Childers and Vajrathan, 1968, quoted by Royal Colle in "Threads of Development Communication", 2002

There was an additional dimension, level or layer of communication in which we worked steadily throughout the whole production process, not as the result of having planned to do so, but perhaps out of some sort of intuition: if we were to succeed in raising the funding and in-kind collaboration we were missing, if we were to keep our crew engaged despite the very small amount of money we could pay them, if we were to manage to disseminate the result of such a struggle, we needed to create and foster a communicative environment in which the whole project could somehow rest and flourish. To my surprise, it turned out that we had covered most of the aspects underlined by Erskine Childers and Mallica Vajrathan in an unpublished paper from 1968 originally aimed at the "UN-Family" in which they referred to "Types of Development Support Communications". The paper is rescued from oblivion and reproduced in full by Royal Colle in his article on "Threads of Development Communication" (Servaes, II, 2002).

Because I strongly believe that this very relevant dimension is usually neglected in communication for development efforts (and also because the context in which *Candabare* was produced, as I will soon discuss, somehow cancelled the possibility of working on most of these aspects), I will sum up briefly what we did, based on Childers and Vajrathan's categorization.

- *Broad public motivation*. How to get people thinking about the project? We did target the printed media both at a provincial and national level and managed to grant ourselves coverage both during the production process and at the time of presenting the documentary for the first time in the cities of Misiones and Buenos Aires.
- *Motivation-orientation of project implementers*. How to ensure that the crew was "properly informed and motivated about the project"? (Servaes, II, 2002: p. 39) We regularly organized group meetings with members, and began by

distributing a written work plan and a letter of motivation among them that were jointly discussed.

- *Specific elite and government-level information.* In Misiones, we organized meetings with the Secretary of Culture, the head and staff of the Educational TV System (SIPTED), and officers at the Secretariat of Tourism. We introduced the project to them and stated the need for coordination in terms of the help that each area had agreed to provide us.

- *Applied research dissemination/feedback on the project to donors.* Specific video reports for feedback to the main donor were prepared to accompany the written progress reports requested by such donor –Fundación Antorchas– to grant the subsequent funding installments. But what about the dissemination of the *concrete product* which resulted from the project? As I've already mentioned, we failed to show the documentary to the community of Tamanduá, due to a combination of bad luck (weather made it impossible to reach the community during our one and only attempt), bad planning (at that stage, even if we were running out of funds, we did not acknowledge the need to consider the weather as a potential contingency) and lack of political support at the very end of the provincial government level. We did show the documentary in the city of Posadas once, but the attendance was almost nil. Most probably out of the need to detach from the field (specially after we had failed in showing the documentary to the community, which was already a degraded substitute of our original intention of discussing a draft with them before completing the editing) and focus on dissemination at what we felt was a broader level (center-periphery dynamics as an internalized disposition), we did not attempt to plan exhibitions at university in Misiones or through the SIPTED's broadcast network. I can't recall if we actually gave VHS copies of the documentary to the provincial state agencies which had cooperated with us. And the same goes for the private companies that assisted us in one way or the other, both in the province and in Buenos Aires: I have no actual register of having done it. However, I did write about the process: a paper for a seminar held in Brazil while the project was still in progress, and an article for a literary magazine published in Buenos Aires. Many years later, in 2003, I wrote a short article for an educational magazine published in Buenos Aires and distributed nationwide called "Novedades Educativas". The impact among the readership of schoolteachers all over the country was so big, that the editorial office of the magazine was swamped with requests of copies of the documentaries for teaching purposes. Regretfully, there was no way we could supply copies free of charge: although at some point in 2001 an area of the National Ministry of Education had shown interest in *Ayvü-Porä* as a didactic material (they even went as far as developing an educational booklet while we discussed the conditions in which we would grant them the right to make copies, something which caused us mixed feelings, since, although we wanted the material to be disseminated, and particularly in educational settings, we were not consulted in any way during the process, and the booklet<sup>63</sup> was made available online without even warning us), the possibility was aborted by the resignation of the then President De la Rúa and the subsequent change of authorities (and plans) in the Ministry.

## QUESTIONS

When we first met with the chieftain, Dionisio Duarte, in the community of Tamanduá, the question we had for him was: "can we do this here?" When we started training some of the young men from the community in the use of the video camera, two of their questions were "is this the zoom?" and "how long does this tape last?". When we discussed what we were doing with some of the members of the community on camera, questions they posed were broad in range: "what is an aboriginal?"; "what is the point of learning how to use these things if we cannot have them?"; "how did you come up with the expression *ayvü-porä*?" When we brought back to the community the developed photographs that they had taken, a repeated question was: "can we keep them?". When we were about to wrap up the shooting, in the last day of our third and final trip, Duarte looked straight to the camera and asked "what are you going to ask next?". Also, we asked ourselves several questions regarding what we were doing and how we were doing it, some of which I have already discussed above. Answers never came easy.

And there was Alcides' question, which I have discussed elsewhere as follows: "Alcides receives Vanessa and me. We've come all the way to remind them that in a few days we will be here again, but this time, with the full crew, and we will stay for a row of days. Dionisio is away on a trip, and therefore Alcides acts as the authority's representative. Suddenly, in the midst of a quite formal conversation, he asks: "What do you call mosquitoes in Buenos Aires?" We look at each other, and we rack our brains trying to come up with an earnest answer. Is he asking about the scientific

name? Maybe he has heard people calling them some other way? However, nothing comes to mind, and so we answer, honestly but with affliction: "mosquitoes". He then gives us a big grin and says: "Down here we don't call them; they come over on their own". We laugh. Because we asked insistently, Alcides later repeated the joke for the camera. The scene prompted the hearty laughter of the audience during the premiere in Buenos Aires, and every audience from then onwards has responded in the same way. In the city, some kind of psychoanalytical obsession leads us to believe that every word harbors a hidden meaning. Freud is always there, and the uneasiness in culture never gives way. At the same time, specialists have increasingly studied humor as a highly relevant variable of communication among people. As American physician Norman Cousins stated in his book *Anatomy of an Illness*, and applying it without rigor to the problem of uneasiness in culture: laughter relieves the pain. In the midst of our troubled efforts to understand the soul-words of the Guaraní essence, to grasp the essence of their sacred language, in our conversation with Alcides we seemed to have reached a point in which translations were momentarily unnecessary: we were laughing with each other" (Engel, 1999).

## CANDABARE/LATE SUMMER CELEBRATION

### CONTEXT

There is a direct connection between *Ayvü-Porä* and *Candabare* –it was because he had seen *Ayvü-Porä* that the anthropologist who has heading the Componente de Atención a la Población Indígena (CAPI) first called contacted us in the year 2000. Also, there are some core elements in common between them: we first approached the chieftain of the Guaraní communities spread along route 34 –in this case, a woman, Gloria Pérez- with the same premises. It was our intention to develop a documentary involving the participation of the communities: discussing with them the contents to be included, involving some of their members in the shooting (we thought that we would do so primarily by teaching them how to use the video cameras, but their involvement turned out to be of a different type, as I will soon discuss), involving as many members of the community as possible in the discussion of an editing draft, and in general sustaining an ongoing dialogue with them regarding our temporary presence in the communities, the work in progress, and the potential use of the documentary for the advancement of their own social, cultural and political goals. Also, *Candabare* had the same director, producer and editor as *Ayvü-Porä*.

However, there were also strong differences. While *Ayvü-Porä* had been a fully independent endeavor, with no strings attached other than the obligation to report progress to the Fundación Antorchas and eventually deliver a copy of the completed work, *Candabare* was a commissioned task: we were requested to develop a proposal, including a work plan and schedule as well as a budget. And once these were approved, we were expected to deliver.

It should also be noted that *Candabare* was our second collaboration with CAPI, and although the first one had been something of a disappointment to us –the director and I, since our editor was not available to work with us in that opportunity- in terms of the level of interest and participation from members of the community that we had managed to achieve in the field, the resulting documentary had proven satisfactory for CAPI, and it had also interested the audiences that had seen it so far. Our ambivalent feelings regarding prior experiences followed us to the field when we first traveled to route 34 to meet with Gloria Pérez. On the one hand, we had undertaken a participatory production process quite successful in many aspects in the case of *Ayvü-Porä*, but we were not able to sustain that participatory approach throughout the editing process or to share the finished documentary *with* the community *in* the community. On the other hand, although we considered the participatory production process we had attempted in the case of *Ayllus/The people* unsuccessful in many ways<sup>64</sup>, the resulting documentary was satisfactory for CAPI, and seen by audiences as a respectful portrait of the community which allowed their own voices.

Because of the characteristics of CAPI (itself a planned and budgeted set of components for which the head of the

program was held accountable, communication being a minor one, while the allotment of money and possibilities allowed for training was more considerable), *Candabare* was submitted as both a training and a documentary-making proposal which would complement each other. And given my academic background in education and overall professional credentials, I was actually the one hired as a consultant in charge of training.

## (SELF) PRESENTATION

Once the documentary was finished, in order to first present it in Buenos Aires and start disseminating it as from then onwards, we wrote a synopsis, put together the technical information and production crew list, and chose a leitmotiv image. Originally written in Spanish, the synopsis was soon translated to English. In 2004, somehow under the influence of my Master studies in progress, and more aware in a way of the need to contextualize the information contained in the synopsis for a "foreign" (the politically correct term being perhaps "international") audience, I rewrote the English version, which I introduce as follows.

### SYNOPSIS

A documentary in collaboration with the Guaraní indigenous communities of Jujuy, Argentina. Directed by Vanessa Ragone.

*Travels, contacts, futures: on the road to discover the other. A documentary film from Argentina.*

Jujuy is one of the twenty-three provinces in Argentina, located in the northwestern corner of the country. Along route 34, in the south-east section of the province, a number of unknown Guaraní indigenous communities struggle to defend their rights -to be able to work, to inhabit and own their ancestral land, to teach their native tongue to their youth- and fight for their culture to be acknowledged.

In a series of travel encounters, a film crew shares with these indigenous communities their yearly carnival celebration: "candabare". Difficult encounters and occasions for dialogue. Skills of survival and interaction. The making and remaking of identities takes place along route 34.

In the heat of the southern summer of 2001, right at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the circle of life spins with the sound of the Guaraní drums, and the wheel of time reverses its sense: the past, enlivened in the present, brings with it the possibility of a diverse future.

### TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Betacam PAL, colour, 50' – © cruzdelsur, 2001

### PRODUCTION CREW

Director: Vanessa Ragone

Producer: Florencia Enghel

Editor: Mariela Yeregui

Sound: Alejandro Seba

Camera and lighting: Göran Gester

Still photograph: Andrea Cipelli

Music: Liliana Herrero



## FUNDING

The documentary was budgeted in ARS 20,000, which by then were still the equivalent of USD 20,000. My consultancy fee was established in an additional ARS 12,000, which was as much as I could collect given my level of seniority as assessed by the IADB. But I did not collect the full amount of money: it went to the pool of the overall real cost of the documentary. Because of technicalities pertaining to CAPI's possibilities and impossibilities, the cost of transportation in the field was not included in either of the two sums of money, and was covered by CAPI directly. Overall, we evaluated the full cost of the documentary, in-the-field transportation costs included, in ARS/USD 35,000, an average cost per minute of USD 700<sup>65</sup>. And even if the crew was not paid the standard fees established by the Syndicate of the Argentine Cinematographic Industry, usually unaffordable for documentary productions, they were not strongly underpaid either: the director and I thought it was wrong to work for the IADB for too little money<sup>66</sup>.

A small budget of USD 500 was granted to us once the documentary for ready, for the purpose of covering the cost of a small press campaign for the premiere presentation in Buenos Aires, the layout of a cover and stickers for VHS copies, and the translation and subtitling to English of a master tape.

## PRODUCTION FIGURES

In the making of *Candabare*, 35 hours of miniDV tapes were recorded, and 4 miniDV cameras were used. There was no additional sound recording: having to choose between an additional cameraman (actually, a camerawoman) and a sound recorder on location, we opted in this case for the camera, since we wanted to be able to cover as much as possible. Also, we thought that the sound of 4 different cameras would still provide the sound mixer with enough material to do his job. The assistant producer, also a photographer, was in charge of still photographs.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

*Candabare* was developed along three trips to the field. When we submitted the proposal to CAPI, we estimated the full timeframe in five months, and we managed to complete the task in that time. We faced no major contingencies throughout the process.

As I said while stating the production figures, four cameras were used. The director, the editor (who this time, contradicting Rouch, was on location with her handycam, and free to shoot as she pleased, since we deemed her point of view of particular interest), a professional cameraman and an apprentice camerawoman (a film student of the director) were in charge of them. Although participation from the community in the production process was intense, members were not particularly interested in learning how to use the cameras, and got involved in other ways instead.

The first trip took place in January 2001. The director and I, alone with the driver<sup>67</sup>, spent three days visiting the communities and presenting the proposal to several representatives and members. Upon arrival we met with the CAPI local representative, himself of indigenous origin but not a resident from the area (I was about to write a "native", but it is actually unclear whether these Guaraní communities were born and have lived strictly in that geographical area themselves, or rather relocated there as the result of a migratory process, which refers us back to Grimson's remarks which I've discussed earlier), who introduced us to different members of the community. Since some of them had been at some point in contact with members of Tamanduá, the community where we shot *Ayvü-Porä*, our prior work there served as an opener.

Our first meeting had a peculiarity: we discussed with a mother and son, both involved in community affairs, our intention to work with the communities in the making of a documentary and have the upcoming carnival as an overall theme. Since the communities were working in the preparations of the festivity, and quite aware of the importance of using the carnival as a leitmotiv to foster their visibility at a local and provincial level, and also as leverage to claim for their rights to own the land and preserve their language and culture, it was easy to come to an agreement. But

as soon as the meeting was over, to our surprise, since by then we had gotten quite used to oral agreements as the usual way with the communities, we were kindly requested to sign a minute of what we had discussed. The moment is recorded on video, and can be seen briefly as part of the backstage images that accompany the ending credits of the documentary. I guess these communities had by then gotten quite used to oral agreements not always being fulfilled by "white" counterparts.

Our meeting with the communities' chieftain was cordial but serious. We introduced ourselves and our background as documentary makers. We gave Gloria copies of *Ayvü-Porä* and *Ayllus* and we proposed that the representatives from the 13 communities watch them together and discuss them before our next trip. Gloria clearly stated the political aim of celebrating the carnival vis-à-vis the "white" society of Jujuy, and stressed the fact that a documentary would allow them to stretch further in that aim. Although she showed interest in the possibility of involving the communities' youth in the use of cameras, this would not turn out to be a feature of our shared work. Then we discussed dates and practical arrangements, and were told that the representatives from the 13 communities would meet to discuss the contents and locations for our shooting, developing a work plan for 7 successive workdays, and that we would be contacted by them through the CAPI local representative. I can still recall quite strongly our being silently overwhelmed by the way in which Gloria handled the overall situation. Two hours of video were shot during the first trip.

No more than ten days after our meeting with Gloria, to our amazement, we received a fax in our office in Buenos Aires: an in-detail work plan, stating dates, locations, contact persons in each location, and situations to be registered. We laughed: led by Gloria, the participating members had turned into quite proficient production assistants (and they would prove to be equally proficient as assistant directors on location). Also, they had obviously accepted the challenge of defining the contents of the documentary.

The second trip took place in February 2001. After some bitter arguing, part of an ongoing discussion with my associate –the director of the documentary– regarding the fact that she thought I was in a way overqualified for the field situation, and that I'd rather stay in our office in Buenos Aires and follow the needs of the crew as from there while working on other stuff<sup>68</sup>, we agreed that I would indeed stay. Therefore, my report corresponding to the trip, part of a series of three which I developed for CAPI, was written based on my production assistant's daily notes from the field, and discussed with the director to check for consistency. All in all, the trip took eight days, during which the crew –5 people in all– worked almost non-stop, following in "real time" the very intense pace of the carnival celebrations, and commuting back and forth between the different communities –locations– in which the shooting took place. Gloria acted as Vanessa's indigenous counterpart, an extremely committed assistant director who made sure that things happened according to plan and that people performed as expected, while constantly following up on the contents being registered.

Two aspects of the shooting process are worth recounting here.

Soon after the crew arrives to the route 34, and upon revising the work plan, it becomes obvious again –the problem had already appeared in our first meeting with Gloria– that it will be impossible to shoot the final stage of the carnival celebrations, the closure gathering and ritual, in "real time". Celebrations last for longer than the crew can afford to stay in the field. Aware of the need to show potential audiences the complete sequence of the carnival celebrations and the meaning of these, Gloria agrees to "stage" the scene ahead of its time, and perform it for the camera (again, this relates to Grimson's remarks already discussed). The performance takes place in the morning of the penultimate day of the crew's stay in the field. For us, the director, the editor and myself, every theoretical discussion regarding the definitions of "documentary", "fiction" and "reality" can be taken up again as from this moment.

By sunset of that same day, the crew had their first and last misunderstanding of the whole trip. In absence of Gloria, aggravated by the driver's lack of collaboration, and in a context that we later discussed as characterized by a loss of the optimal distance (or optimal closeness) with our fellow Guaraní documentary-makers, the crew had to face

strong accusations by a young community member –the very same one we had met upon arrival to the field the first time, together with his mother, when we were requested to sign a minute of our agreement. According to him, because the crew arrived late to a location, an important gathering that he expected to be registered had gone lost. The incident turned out to be minor, since Gloria disregarded it the day after, when contacted by Vanessa who wanted to excuse herself and the crew. However, I can still recall a long talk I had on the phone with my associate, who called in distress late that evening, lost in the very strong words of the Guaraní man –“you white people, it's always the same story”, he apparently said, in the heat of the misunderstanding– and trying to understand what had gone wrong after seven days in which a spirit of collaboration and mutual fondness had ruled<sup>69</sup>.

Thirty-one hours of video were shot during this trip.

The third trip took place in May 2001. We spent an afternoon and evening with members of the thirteen communities who had gathered at a community center to watch the draft editing of the documentary with us. While people were arriving from the different locations, a process that took a while, *Ayvü-Porä* and *Ayllus* were shown. Eventually, Gloria took the floor, and then Vanessa followed. She explained that the editing process was not finished, and that the purpose of showing this draft to those present was to know their impressions and incorporate their suggestions<sup>70</sup>. She also explained that we had tried to edit a documentary that would satisfy the communities, but also interest other audiences that may not know of their existence. An in-detail written report of the gathering, an analysis of the dynamics and outcomes of it, and almost two hours of video footage, which cannot be discussed here, are available and would constitute an invaluable material should any further research derive from *Candabare* and/or this essay. I will only note that after viewing the draft, the chieftain requested one formal change, to which the director agreed.

## CONTENT AND FORMAT

During the second field trip, every day after the day's shooting had ended, the director and the editor, both camerawomen while on location, would gather and monitor the material that all four cameras had recorded. This procedure served two main purposes: on the one hand, it allowed them to stay aware of the material they had and what else to look for, serving as feedback for the remaining days of shooting; on the other hand, it introduced them already there and then to the editing process, again somehow in the spirit of Rouch's discussion of the work of Vertov: “The director-cameraman who shoots direct cinema is his own first spectator in the viewfinder of the camera. All of his bodily improvisations (camera movement, framing, shot lengths) finally result in editing while shooting. Here again we are back to Vertov's idea: “The ciné-eye is: I edit when I choose my subject (from among millions of possible subjects). I edit when I observe (i.e., film) my subject (making a choice among millions of possible observations)” (A.B.C. of the Kinoks)” (Rouch, 1974: 41)<sup>71</sup>.

The bulk of editing was done before showing the draft to the community. After we returned from the third trip, a “coda” or second ending was added, to include the interviews to members of the community commenting on the draft. With that “coda” came the idea for the ending credits, in which we decided to first re-present every member of the community appearing in the documentary with their names and last names, mirroring the usual procedure to introduce casts in feature films, and then include an array of backstage images showing the crew in interaction with the communities, as well as unveiling a few of the “fictional tricks” –moments specifically staged for the camera– that both parties had engaged in.

As we had done before with *Ayvü-Porä*, the sound mix was edited once the main structure was in place. Once again, voice-over was avoided.

I would want to note here that even if *Candabare* had been commissioned by CAPI, we retained, as the production company in charge, the right to decide on the final cut of the film. The head of the Program was shown a copy of the draft before our third trip to the communities, but he did not have a saying in the structure. When he had first called

us to commission *Ayllus*, my associate and I had had a long, deep discussion about where to set the limit, if we were to agree to work for the IADB: the risk of the work attempted in *Ayvü-Porã* being co-opted by the Bank was something that really worried us, as did potential critics coming from the more so-called political wing of the independent documentary makers in Buenos Aires.

## COMMUNICATION AS SUPPORT

Since the project had been commissioned by CAPI and was being fully funded with IADB funds, and given the fact that institutional relationships between CAPI, the National Ministry of Social Development (in which the CAPI office was located) and the provincial government of Jujuy were complex, not to say obscure, there was not much we could do in terms of communication as support during the production process. All sorts of potential political misunderstandings awaiting, which is always the case when state funding is visibly available for one thing while lacking for another, deemed by the people as equally or more important, we were requested to do our job and stay low profile<sup>72</sup>.

We could only seek for press coverage when the time came to premiere the documentary in Buenos Aires, and to our dismay, the media's reaction was that we were doing again what we had already done –indigenous peoples, cameras, documentary- and that therefore there was no novelty to report.

I developed three in-depth reports, corresponding to each one of the trips to the field, which were submitted to CAPI as requested (and I was requested to sign a confidentiality clause, apparently a standard procedure for employees of the Bank, to prevent me from ever releasing copies of those reports). Also, at the request of the communities, and mainly for their own use, drawing on the master tapes produced throughout the production process 13 short documentary pieces were edited, portraying each one of the 13 communities involved in some more detail.

## ► BACK TO KEYWORDS: DOCUMENTARY, MEDIATION, MEDIA

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"What are these films, and by what weird name shall we distinguish them from other films? Do they actually exist?"  
Jean Rouch, "The camera and man", 1974

The study of documentary, as a particular strand of filmmaking, is in itself an ample field, as evidenced by the many examples readily available from the academic literature. I will not discuss the term in detail here. Among the profuse array of definitions available, I will opt in this case to use Ruby's characterization as a starting point for what follows, since it enunciates the complexity of the matter I have been discussing so far: "The documentary is assumed to give a "voice to the voiceless," that is, portray the political, social and economic realities of oppressed minorities and others previously denied access to the means of producing their own image. From this perspective, the documentary is not only an art form, it is a social service and a political act" (Ruby, 1991: 51)<sup>73</sup>.

### > THE ORIGINS

The origin of the *actual practices* and the *concrete products* in question in this essay is connected to the works of three figures: Robert Flaherty and Dziga Vertov in the 1920s, and Jean Rouch as from the late 1940s<sup>74</sup>. Rouch himself discussed both Flaherty and Vertov as the inventors of ethnographic film in an article published in 1974: "At that point, our discipline was invented by two geniuses. One, Robert Flaherty, was a geographer-explorer who was doing ethnography without knowing it. The other, Dziga Vertov, was a futurist poet who was doing sociology, equally without knowing it" (Rouch, 1974: 38; see also Ruby, 1991)<sup>75</sup>.

Ginsburg, in turn, discusses Rouch's relevance to the field: "...questions of epistemology, ethics, and the position of the native interlocutor were being addressed in the 1950s by ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch (...)" (Ginsburg, 1986: 95). So does Ruby: "In a new study of Rouch as ethnographer and filmmaker, Paul Stoller suggests that Rouch was a "premature" postmodern anthropologist. Rouch's films of the 1950s and 1960s embodied themes of ethnographic postmodernity articulated in the well-known works of recent years (that is, Marcus, Clifford, etc.)". Ruby points out that "Rouch pioneered a reflexive style in *Chronicle of a Summer*, where one sees subjects actively participating in the production" (Ruby, 1991: 57)<sup>76</sup>.

The works of Vertov, Flaherty and Rouch must be taken into account in any study of documentary-making as a participatory form of communication for development. And also, as a warning, and a reminder of one of the constraints faced by communication for development that must be necessarily overcome –the lack of communication, exchange and interconnectedness, both within the field and as regards other related disciplines. We must acknowledge, on the one hand, the fact that, as stated by Rouch, Vertov and Flaherty, although contemporaries in their works, and unique in their approaches to them, "never met (...). And ethnographers and sociologists who were inventing their new disciplines in the very midst of these two incredible observers had no contact with either of them" (Rouch, 1974: 38). Also, as stated by Ruby, the fact that "Marcus, Clifford and others who have defined the postmodern crisis in the eighties have largely ignored the work of people like Jean Rouch, who in the 1950s explored (...) issues of representation in his films (Stoller 1991)" (Ruby, 1991: 63).

### > DOCUMENTARY-MAKING AS INTERACTION

"If all of this sounds familiar, it should. It stretches back to Flaherty and the Eskimos: "My work", Flaherty said later, "had been built up along with them". I couldn't have done anything without them. In the end it is all a question of human relationships""  
Calvin Pryluck, "Ultimately we are all outsiders", 1976

Concerns already posed while discussing communication, development, communication for development and participatory communication as keywords arise as well in academic literature more tightly connected to documentary-making. Pryluck refers to the importance of recognizing "... –in the filming and the film- that the production crew is in social interaction with its subjects" (Pryluck, 1976: 29).

Feldman, in his provocative discussion of the Bantu Kinema Educational Experiment, developed in Africa as early as 1935, states that "The Experiment demonstrates film-making as small group dynamics. It is, at that, a kind of small group dynamic that stretches over time to include participants viewing the finished products years after their production" (Feldman, 1977: 23). He discusses power issues as regards filmmaking, and the connection he establishes between filmmaker or crew, subject and audience, and his approach to it, is one that we tried to explore and expose in the making of *Ayvupo* and *Candabare*. Referring to the Experiment, Feldman notes that "Filmmaking created roles. The creation of these roles necessitated decisions about the powers and freedoms of the individuals concerned" (Feldman, 1977: 36). According to him, "...these decisions have always and will always be made. It is a further contention that the oath to more honest film-making is not to deny the inevitability of these power structures but rather to work on strategies that will expose them to all concerned" (Feldman, 1977: 36). It is Feldman's view that "In the long run, these complexities of subject/filmmaker interaction are not to be regretted. Rather, by acknowledging them, the filmmaker could consciously play with them before an audience that is aware of what is being done" (Feldman, 1977: 36).

#### > THE ETHICS OF DOCUMENTARY-MAKING

"Questions about the legitimacy of one's presence in a foreign setting (especially one in which power relations are unequal) as an outsider with a camera should always be raised, and generally have been in most successful projects. The fact that the people one is dealing with also have cameras and choose to represent themselves with them should not diminish that concern, nor does it make the act of taking those images by outsiders illegitimate. Filming others and filming one's own group are related but distinct parts of a larger project of reflecting upon the particulars of human condition, and therefore each approach raises its own sets of issues regarding ethics, social and power relations"  
Faye Ginsburg, "Indigenous media", 1986

"Ultimately, we are all outsiders in the lives of others. We can take our gear and go home; they have to continue their lives where they are"  
Calvin Pryluck, "Ultimately we are all outsiders", 1976

Pryluck has a point when he states that "With the best intentions in the world, filmmakers can only guess how the scenes they use will affect the lives of the people they have photographed; even a seemingly innocuous image may have meaning for the people involved that is obscure to the filmmaker" (Pryluck, 1976: 23). An issue we discussed deeply, as a creative team, while editing both *Ayvupo* and *Candabare*, was what to show to audiences and how, of what we had shot. The fact that the communities lived in poverty, although not in the kind of very obvious extreme poverty that can be found nowadays in urban concentrations of every city in Argentina, and how to refer to what they lacked in economic, social or political terms as brought up by themselves in interviews, without depriving them of their dignity, was a constant concern. We wanted to draw a somewhat balanced line. Perhaps, as an attempt to deal with what Ruby characterizes as follows: "At the same time as subjects are asserting their right to control their own image, there is the growing recognition on the part of the independent documentary community that it is difficult to justify making films about the private acts of the pathological, socially disadvantaged, politically disenfranchised, and the economically oppressed. As Brian Winston (1988) has suggested, documentarians are becoming self-conscious about their "tradition of the victim"" (Ruby, 1991: 52).

Pryluck actually seems to suggest collaborative editing as a preventive measure to deal with potential ethical failures: the decision about what to show must be shared, agreed upon. According to him, "...a filmmaker's commitment to a subject cannot be open-ended. It need not be. There is less basis for grievance if subjects actually collaborate in

the editing while the film is still being worked on, than if they had merely been offered a final print for approval. (...) The filmmaker's best guess on the potential effects of the film and particular scenes must be part of truly informed consent" (Pryluck, 1976: 28).

In Pryluck's view, "The right to privacy is the right to decide how much, to whom, and when disclosures about one's self are to be made" (Pryluck, 1976: 24). And as related to this, I must point out here again that, although in both cases we obtained consent from community authority figures for the making of the documentaries, we did not ask the people actually portrayed to sign release forms as a way of furthering, deepening and securing their consent. Also, the editing draft we showed to members of the communities on the case of *Candabare*, although not yet finished and therefore open to changes if requested, was in our view almost a final draft. These limitations call for a critical awareness of the obstacles to participation that can interfere with the best of intentions, when the extent of an intervention is not thoroughly envisioned at the planning stage of a project.

### > PARTICIPATION

"Documentary has not yet been graced with a definition but it has, in the last 15 years or so, acquired an ideal. The ideal is that of the subject-generated film or videotape. The ethical principle spawned by the ideal is the popular notion that the degree of truth (or, at least, integrity) to be found in any one work is directly proportional to the amount of subject participation in its creation"

Seth Feldman, "Viewer, viewing, viewed", 1977

"Perhaps we should wonder if surrendering the functions of camera operator, sound recordist, and director to the subject is really a surrender. Do these shifts in function merely represent strategic withdrawals which leave greater powers in the hands of producers, distributors, exhibitors and, not surprisingly, the financial backers of the enterprise? At least in the case of film, we should look with some creative skepticism at the products of a medium that has been notoriously sticky-fingered in dispensing creative freedom"

Seth Feldman, "Viewer, viewing, viewed", 1977

Rouch discusses participation as an element of filmmaking in depth in his article "The camera and man". He recalls Flaherty's sharing of his footage with his subject as the origin of participatory observation and feedback: "For Flaherty, in 1920, filming the life of the Northern Eskimos meant filming a particular Eskimo –not filming things, but filming an individual. And the basic honesty of the endeavor meant showing that individual all the footage he had shot" (Rouch, 1974: 38). And he explains his own understanding of participation: "Namely, the presentation of the rough cut, from head to tail, for the people who were filmed. For me, their participation is essential" (Rouch, 1974: 41). According to Rouch, "This type of a posteriori working is just the beginning of what is already a new type of relationship between the anthropologist and the group he studies, the first step in what some of us have labeled "shared anthropology"<sup>78</sup>. (...) And for the first time, the work is not judged by a thesis committee but by the very people the anthropologist went out to observe. This extraordinary technique of "feedback" (which I would translate as "audiovisual reciprocity") has certainly not yet revealed all of its possibilities. But already, thanks to it, the anthropologist has ceased to be a sort of entomologist observing others as if they were insects (thus putting them down) and has become a stimulator of mutual awareness (hence dignity). This type of totally participatory research, as idealistic as it may seem, appears to me to be the only feasible anthropological attitude today" (Rouch, 1974: 43).

Pryluck, concerned with the complexity of consent and the right to privacy of documentary subjects, refers to the fact that "On the assumption that no one can know a culture as well as its members, it is a practice in the social sciences for investigators to state their understanding in their own words and check these formulations with members of the culture. The information gathering process thus becomes a collaborative seeking after knowledge on the part of scientists and their subjects. It is not unusual for the process to continue through to the final draft to permit subjects second thoughts about the propriety of disclosing certain private information" (Pryluck, 1976: 26). In his account

he states degrees of participation and differentiates what he calls a "traditional" and a "collaborative" approach to editing: "Typically, the filmmaker starts the cut and carries it through. In the traditional approach, the people in the film are presented with a completed film. In a collaborative approach to editing, the participants have an opportunity to offer their interpretations of the material before the form of the film is irrevocably set" (Pryluck, 1976: 26).

Ruby discusses participation as well. In his view, "Being able to hear people tell their stories and observe their lives instead of being told what they think and the meaning of their behavior clearly offers subjects a greater say in the construction of their image. It represents a major shift in attitude about where one looks for authority and authenticity (...) It is "speaking with" instead of "speaking for"". According to him, however, as long as editorial control remains in the hands of the filmmaker, "The empowerment of the subject is therefore more illusionary than actual. While new voices are heard, traditional forms of authorship have not been significantly altered". In particular, he points at the fact that "The criteria for selection and editing is never made available to the viewer" (Ruby, 1991: 54). Ruby notes that "For a production to be truly collaborative (...) [I]nvolvement in the decision-making process must occur at all significant junctures" (Ruby, 1991: 56), and the questions he poses could be used as preliminary guidelines for the assessment of any so called participatory documentary: "Before a film can be judged as a successful collaboration the mechanics of the production must be understood. Is the collaboration to be found at all stages of the production? Have the filmmakers trained the subjects in technical and artistic production skills or are the subjects merely "subject area specialists" who gauge the accuracy of the information and pass upon the political and moral correctness of the finished work? Who had the idea for the film in the first place? Who raised and controls the funds? Who owns the equipment? Who is professionally concerned with the completion of the film? Who organizes and controls the distribution?" (Ruby, 1991: 56).

#### > AUTHORSHIP

"Canadian critic Patrick Watson summed up the filmmaker's antipathy to collaboration in editing: "Ceding authority over the edit is revolutionary; it requires a curious submission of the director's ego"

Seth Feldman, "Viewer, viewing, viewed", 1977

"For whom, and why, take the camera among mankind? My first response will always, strangely, be the same: "for me" (...) And that's where I get my second response to "for whom, and why?". Film is the only means I have to show someone else how I see him. For me, after the pleasure of the "ciné-trance" in shooting and editing, my first public is the other, those whom I've filmed"

Jean Rouch, "The camera and man", 1974

"Questions of voice, authority, and authorship have become a serious concern among documentary filmmakers and anthropologists. Who can represent someone else, with what intention, in what "language," and in what environment is a conundrum that characterizes the postmodern era"

Jay Ruby, "Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside", 1991

"Ironically, the traditional form of the journalistic documentary not only denied a voice to subjects but to the filmmakers as well"

Jay Ruby, "Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside", 1991

In his article "Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside", Ruby thoroughly discusses the issue of authorship as related to documentary making. In a remark which I find particularly enlightening when applied to the making of *Ayvupo*, he states that "In trying to give the subjects' voice room in their films, documentarians are also attempting to locate a new voice for themselves. In so doing, some recognize that audiences need to understand that documentaries always speak about and never speak for a subject and that films never allow us to see the world through the eyes of the native, unless the native is behind the camera" (Ruby, 1991: 62).

In addressing the factors that led to such attempts, he considers two as relevant: "First, the end of the colonial era among people subjugated by capitalist empires and socialist satellites caused the authority of a Western male, middle-class, heterosexual construction of reality to be contested. People formerly the object of our gaze and dissident filmmakers from within the system challenged the right to represent anyone but yourself. Among the many results of this upheaval was the realization that cultural identity is not eternally fixed but something that has to be regularly renegotiated". And second, and I would stress the relevance of this: "...the development of literary or "new" journalism, non-fiction novels, docudramas, and other genres blurred distinctions between fiction and non-fiction (...). The documentary's claim to an inside track to the truth and reality of other people was therefore undermined if not destroyed completely. Documentaries were recognized as an articulation of a point of view-not a window into reality". According to Ruby, "The response by the independent documentary community to the crisis of representation has been far reaching-from the methodological and technical to the formal. Some documentarians have questioned their ability to "speak for" anyone and began looking for ways to "speak about" or "speak with" (Nichols 1983). As notions of objectivity were challenged by more tentative attitudes towards the social construction of reality, some filmmakers openly acknowledged that their authority was circumscribed, even uncertain at times" (Ruby, 1991: 53).

Ruby goes further and states the documentarian's responsibilities in the context of the so-called crisis of representation. In his view, "Since the public still believes that documentary films can be objective, the documentarian has the additional obligation never to appear neutral, that is, to disabuse people of the fantasy that films are somehow privileged messages with an inside track to truth and reality" (Ruby, 1991: 53). Also, "As the acknowledged author of a film, the documentarian assumes responsibility for whatever meaning exists in the image, and therefore is obligated to discover ways to make people aware of point of view, ideology, author biography, and anything else deemed relevant to an understanding of the film, that is, to become reflexive (Ruby 1977). They abandon the idea that being moral means being objective and in its place openly acknowledge the ideological base of all human knowledge, including films" (Ruby, 1991: 54).

It is not only the relationship between oneself as an author and the subject of the documentary, but also between author and viewer, that must be acknowledged and transformed, incorporating a preoccupation for audiences, reception and meaning-making as a level of analysis. Media products must be studied not only in terms of content, but definitely in the context of their production, dissemination/distribution and reception trajectories.

### > ETHNOGRAPHIC MEDIA, OR DOCUMENTARY-MAKING AS MEDIATING

"Every time a film is made there is a cultural disruption"  
Jean Rouch, "The camera and man", 1974

In her writing, Faye Ginsburg frames and discusses indigenous media and ethnographic film. Although neither *Ayvupo* or *Candabare* belong to either of those two categories -we were not indigenous, and we were not anthropologists or ethnographers, but an odd combination of two filmmakers and an educator-, some of the issues raised by Ginsburg could be useful for a deeper analysis of them. Both documentaries could be inscribed in Ginsburg's description of indigenous media as "...new vehicles for internal and external communication, for self-determination, and for resistance to outside cultural domination. The new media forms they are creating are innovations in both filmic representation and social process, expressive of transformations in cultural identities in terms shaped by local and global conditions of the late 20th century" (Ginsburg, 1986: 92).

Ginsburg states that "Paralleling a similar shift in ethnographic writing, (...) changes in ethnographic film practice to accommodate indigenous interests were, according to David MacDougall, a shift away from "reconstruction of pre-contact situations towards an examination of the realities of contemporary Aboriginal experience. Initially this took the form of supporting and documenting Aboriginal moves for cultural reassertion... (1987: 55)" (Ginsburg, 1986: 93). It could be said that that was the case with *Candabare*, in particular (while *Ayvupo* remains perhaps a media exploration of a pre-contact situation). It was our purpose, in developing the documentary, to use "The capabilities of media to transcend

boundaries of time, space, and even language (...) to mediate, literally, historically produced social ruptures and to help construct identities that link past and present in ways appropriate to contemporary conditions" (Ginsburg, 1986: 94).

But the most relevant element in Ginsburg's discussion for the purpose of this essay is her definition of ethnographic media, an understanding of documentary-making as mediating, intended to incorporate both indigenous media and ethnographic film "...in some analytically meaningful way" (Ginsburg, 1986: 104). Ginsburg explains that she uses the term media "...not simply because that term also embraces video and television which play an ever-increasing role in these concerns. I would like to draw attention to other uses of the word media. The American College Dictionary defines it as "an intervening substance, through which a force acts or an effect is produced, (2) an agency, means or instrument" related to mediate: "to act between parties to effect an understanding, compromise, reconciliation"" (Ginsburg, 1986: 104).

According to Ginsburg, the kind of media she is referring to is "...intended to communicate something about that social or collective identity we call "culture", in order to mediate (one hopes) across gaps of space, time, knowledge, and prejudice. The films most closely associated with the genre (ideally) work toward creating understanding between two groups separated by space and social practice" (Ginsburg, 1986: 104). Also, "...they are about the processes of identity construction. They are not based on some retrieval of an idealized past, but create and assert a position for the present that attempts to accommodate the inconsistencies and contradictions of contemporary life" (Ginsburg, 1986: 105).

It could be said that the sum of these two explanations, plus Ruby's definition of documentary as an art form, a social service and a political act, frame *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* as communication for development undertakings.

#### > DISSEMINATION AND(OR) DISTRIBUTION

"In 1948, when André Leroi-Gourhan organized the first ethnographic film congress at the Musée de l'Homme, he asked himself, "Does the ethnographic film actually exist?". He could only respond, "It exists, since we project it" (Leroi-Gourhan 1948)"

Jean Rouch, "The camera and man", 1974

"At political, artistic and economic odds with the mainstream media industries, independents are in a seventy year-old ideological struggle against Hollywood and commercial television's representation of the world and the industry's insistence that moving images should be mindless entertainment"

Jay Ruby, "Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside", 1991

"A variation of symbolic annihilation is the perpetuation of the dominant culture's stereotypic view of the world"

Jay Ruby, "Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside", 1991

"The image empires may ultimately win the war but there are some battles where temporary victories are possible"

Jay Ruby, "Speaking for, speaking about, speaking with, or speaking alongside", 1991

Back in 1974, Rouch pointed out to the fact that "(...) it is rare that an ethnographic film finds commercial distribution" even if "...the majority of ethnographic films made in recent years share the same format as productions made for commercial release: credits, background music, sophisticated editing, narration addressed to the general public, proper duration, etc." (Rouch, 1974: 39). I have already discussed, as related to the Argentine context, the constraints faced by documentaries in terms of the availability of adequate slots, funding and policies for production and distribution. I cannot endorse Rouch's opinion, who thought that "... if the distribution of ethnographic film is, with rare exceptions, limited to university networks, cultural organizations, and scholarly societies, the fault is more our own than that of commercial cinema" (Rouch, 1974: 43). Moreover, I should point out that in Argentina even the possibility of distributing documentaries to universities, schools, and museums or other cultural organizations, remains extremely limited, since such institutions rarely have a budget for the purchase of educational materials other

than the very basic ones.

Ginsburg refers to the fact that "Efforts to produce indigenous media worldwide are generally small-scale, low budget and locally based". According to her, "because of this, their existence is politically and economically fragile, while their significance is largely invisible outside of occasional festivals or circles of specialists" (Ginsburg, 1986: 92). In connection to those observations, although, as I said, *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* are part of a series of four documentaries, so far we have not managed to (re)present the series as such and attempt its systematic dissemination. Aiming at faculties with anthropology, culture or media studies in the United States and Europe is something we have discussed, but the cost of developing an adequate website and e-catalogue (plus the cost of translating and subtitling the other two documentaries in the series, and of developing the proper packaging for DVD versions), is something we have not been able to find funding for.

On a different level but still related to distribution and dissemination, Ginsburg refers to "broadcast quality" as "an elusive and problematic term for somewhat arbitrary technical standards for productions used by television stations, that effectively keeps low-budget and unconventional work off the air" (Ginsburg, 1986: 100). As I have already discussed, *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* remained off the air not because of their technical standard or format, but because of the TV broadcast policies in terms of programming. According to Ruby, "In order to gain some insight into the problems facing a multivocal documentary, the production and distribution of documentary films must be examined within the larger context of world television. It is the marketplace of television that determines the future of the documentary" (Ruby, 1991: 60). Related to what I have already discussed for the context of Argentina, as posed by both Grimson and Puiggros. Ruby states that "Television, whether private or state controlled, whether broadcast, cable or satellite, is by its economic and technological construction a force for culture centralization. A few conceive, construct and are empowered to transmit to the many. The socio-cultural purpose of television is to reify, underwrite, support and espouse the ideology of the status quo. Television functions the way religion and other supernatural systems used to, that is, as the underpinning of official culture". In his view, "When faced with linguistic, religious, ethnic or sexual minorities, the historical response of the television industry has been symbolically to annihilate the group, that is, not represent them at all. If it is true that most people obtain information about world events from TV news, then the fact that a group seldom appears on television becomes a serious issue" (Ruby, 1991: 61).

An in-detail account of the dissemination trajectories of *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* both at a national and international level, in cultural and educational settings as well as in media festivals, will not be given here and remains a necessary, pending task. In particular, the impossibility not of distributing them commercially, but of broadcasting them at no cost (since the production costs had been covered, we were in both cases prepared to grant rights to whichever broadcaster would have shown interest), would deserve further discussion in the context of divides in the field of communication for development regarding the scale of efforts which tend to oppose community-level approaches to mass media endeavors, when one and the other, depending on the case, could work complementarily.

## > THE IMPORTANCE OF DOCUMENTING PRACTICE

"...as John Lent noted in his collection *Case Studies of Mass Media in the Third World*, "The hard work of empirically done case studies on individual media in particular countries remains to be done" (1979: V)"

Faye Ginsburg, "Indigenous media", 1986

Both Ginsburg and Ruby refer to the lack of documenting and analysis of the type(s) of media hereby discussed. According to Ginsburg, "There is very little written on these developments, and what exists comes mostly in the form of newsletters and reports, which are useful, but do not address directly broader theoretical questions regarding how these developments alter understandings of media, politics, and representation" (Ginsburg, 1986: 92). In her view, "The lack of analysis of such media as both cultural product and social process may also be due to our own culture's enduring positivist belief that the camera provides a "window" on reality, a simple expansion of our powers of observation, as opposed to a creative tool in the service of a new signifying practice" (Ginsburg, 1986: 93).

In Ruby's view, "While the idea of films where the authority is shared might have a certain appeal, there are few documented cases. Films labeled in this fashion seldom contain descriptions of the interaction between the filmer and the filmed nor have people associated with the production written about the complex mechanics of collaborations. (...) Without more concrete information the notion of sharing authority remains more of a politically correct fantasy than a field-tested actuality" (Ruby, 1991: 56). It is his contention that "It may be that films of shared authority are an impossibility. (...) Until a film reputed to have been produced by sharing the authority has been documented, it is impossible to know whether the idea is feasible" (Ruby, 1991: 58). However, I disagree with his remark that "... there seems to be little interest among the politically committed film community in the development of empirical verification of the impact of social and political documentaries" (Ruby, 1991: 52). Speaking for a moment as an independent producer, I must point out that the struggle to fund and complete the production process of a documentary and see it through the completion of the *concrete product* is such (as was the case with *Ayvupo*), that there are simply no time, energy or resources left to follow up on the dissemination and reception trajectories of the films in a systematic way. In the case of *Candabare*, even if the material, as I have said, was commissioned as part of the communication component of a development project, the project leader did not work on any dissemination strategies or actions other than the ones we proposed and carried out on a voluntary basis.

#### > AUDIENCES

"A final notion, which viewed in terms of intention is really the first point, is to my mind essential for ethnographic film today. (...) "For whom, and why, have you made this film?"  
Jean Rouch, "The camera and man", 1974

In his article, Ruby poses a question that goes all the way back to my foreword to this essay, when I paraphrase Gérald Grunberg's expression: "This essay has not dealt with the complexities of audience. Issues of intention and reception are of course crucial. We are all receivers (audiences) long before we ever contemplate making our own images. If we are socialized into assuming the world created by television is real, are we doomed simply to replicate that assumption when we make our films and videos?" (Ruby, 1991: 60).

The complexities of audience remain beyond the scope of this essay. However, I would want to stress again that media products must be studied as such in close connection to their production, dissemination/distribution and reception trajectories. And if the reception trajectories of both *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* were to be studied, the theoretical framework in which to inscribe them would be in my view very much in line with the one introduced by Hoover and Russo in their paper "Modes of engagement in research on media meaning-making". I understand audiences as "active in meaning-making" (Hoover and Russo, 2002: 7) and at the same time as "embedded in social and cultural conditions" (2002: 8). However, the household would not be utilized as the "unit of investigation" or "primary site of media consumption". On the one hand, I would consider the indigenous communities, and whichever spots could be identified as meeting points within them, as the sites in which to study what Hoover and Russo define as "interactions about media" (2002: 17). On the other hand, I would focus on classroom groups as audiences, at different levels (in high school and university, most probably) and in different locations (comparing classrooms in Buenos Aires with classrooms in Misiones and Jujuy would most probably be a first stage, eventually aiming at comparison with foreign classroom settings) as the sites where to study what Hoover and Russo define as "experiences in media", making the relative learning derived from them –and not strictly the pleasure, although pleasure is an element of learning– as well as the understanding of the documentaries, the focus of my potential research.

## ► PRELIMINARY CONCLUDING

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As I approach the ending of this essay, I begin to see the openings that might arise from having begun to systematize in writing the actual processes that led to *Ayvupo* and *Candabare*. In, particular, I would want to point out here two recommendations, and a few potential further lines of work.

### AS REGARDS THE SUBJECTS OF A COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION (RECOMMENDATION 1)

Hopefully, this essay will add to what Ginsburg terms as "...current debates in several fields regarding the politics and poetics of representation, the development of media in Third and Fourth World settings, and the expansion of ethnographic film theory and the canon associated with it" (Ginsburg, 1986: 93).

However, going back to the basics –the people in the field- it is important to stress that we must stay fully aware of the conditions in which these people live, and the concrete purposes that any specific communication for development must serve as regards those conditions. Perhaps this anecdote retrieved by Ginsburg from Sol Worth and John Adair's "attempt to put the camera directly into native hands" will illustrate my point:

"Adair explained that he wanted to teach some Navajo to make movies... When Adair finished, Sam thought for a while and then... asked a lengthy question which was interpreted as, "Will making movies do sheep any harm?" Worth was happy to explain that as far as he knew, there was no chance that making movies would harm the sheep. Sam thought this over and then asked, "Will making movies do the sheep good?" Worth was forced to reply that as far as he knew making movies wouldn't do the sheep any good. Sam thought this over, then, looking around at us he said, "Then why make movies?" (Worth and Adair 1972: 5)" (Ginsburg, 1986: 96).

I could also recall, as related to this, Bonifacio's words in *Ayvupo*, when we asked him what he thought about our work with the community:

"It's nice to learn just for the sake of it, but... We're going to know how to use the camera, but having stuff for ourselves is the most important thing, and that's going to be pretty hard... To me, learning and not having is the same as not learning at all" (*Ayvü-Porä*, 1998).

### AS REGARDS PRACTITIONERS (RECOMMENDATION 2)

An important remark in this sense is posed by Colle: "A communication plan should be tailored to the particular conditions being faced. (...) For even if the principles remain the same, the details will almost certainly call for differences" (Colle in Servaes, II, 2002: 65). The principles as regards the making of *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* in terms of approaching and involving our subjects were actually the same. However, the particular conditions of both communities, as well as of our reaching them, called for differences.

### AS REGARDS RESEARCH AND THEORY

I have already discussed throughout the essay several aspects regarding research and theory-building in the field of communication for development. Taking the two documentaries introduced here as a case study, as an example of how productive the study of concrete products can be for the advancement of the field, the following still unexplored lines of work can be readily identified:

- development and analysis of an in-detail account of the documentaries' dissemination trajectories, to establish their outreach impact;

- development of action-research in the communities in which the documentaries were developed, to "map out the media's varied uses and meanings for particular social subjects in particular social contexts" (Hoover and Russo, 2002: 6);
- development of audience studies in classroom settings, to analyze both meaning-making attitudes and the educational utility of the materials;
- development of strategic handbooks aimed at providing students and practitioners an introductory guide to the field of participatory documentary-making both in conceptual and practical terms.

The study of *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* as hereby discussed also points to the fact that it would be worth exploring ways of establishing steady mechanisms for the communication, exchange and collaboration among practitioners in the field and researchers at universities.

## ► DISCUSSION OF METHOD: WRITING THIS THESIS AS (AN ATTEMPT TO OVERCOME) A CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

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"As Richardson emphasizes: "Although we usually think about writing as a mode of "telling" about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of "knowing" -a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it""

Robert M. Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research*, 2001

"Adorno recovers the fragmentary nature of the essay, its side-taking, its ambiguities, its excessive interpretations, its construction of evidence of what is being affirmed based on the experience of the writer's subjectivity, its critical nature par excellence, its exposition to error and the risks generally taken. The essay has no beginning and no pre-established ending; it does not define its concepts like a dictionary of the social sciences but does so through reciprocal relations, in the weave of the narration. It proceeds in a methodically anti-methodic way"

Oscar Landi, "Cuestiones de género", 1990

"My levers for prying open the culture idea were expanded concepts of *writing* and *collage*, the former seen as interactive, open-ended, and processual, the latter as a way of making space for heterogeneity, for historical and political, not simply aesthetic, juxtapositions"

James Clifford, *Routes/Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*, 1997

"For language is in every case not only communication of the communicable but also, at the same time, a symbol of the noncommunicable"

Walter Benjamin, quoted by Trinh T. Minh-Ha in *When the moon waxes red*, 1991

"The reading and writing of the word would always imply a more critical rereading of the world as a 'route' to the "rewriting" -the transformation- of that world"

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of hope/Reliving Pedagogy of the oppressed*, 2003

In his lecture on "Exactitude", the third one right after "Lightness" and "Quickness", part of his late collection of lectures *Six memos for the new millennium*, Italian writer Italo Calvino wrote: "Rather than speak to you of what I have written, perhaps it would be more interesting to tell you about the problems that I have not yet resolved, that I don't know how to resolve, and what they will cause me to write..." (Calvino, 1988: 68).

Writing this thesis -attempting to unveil the operations and procedures involved in the process of conceptualizing as from professional experience through writing as the main tool- was from the very beginning a difficult task. Questions that arose were:

What am I writing about?

Who am I writing for?

What does my way of writing say -or fail to express- about the matters I intend to discuss? How does form interact with content to convey a (my?) message?

What do I mean?

How do I envision by now the politics of writing in (for?) the academic field when it comes to arts and education?

Answers didn't come easy.

Additionally, deciding what to draw into the picture and what to leave out was also a complex matter. I had to hold on repeatedly to Clifford's remark: "Full accountability, of course, like the dream of self-knowledge, is elusive. The kind of situated analysis I have in mind is more contingent, inherently partial" (Clifford, 1997: 11).

Deciding to go for an essay format, although a conscious decision, felt risky. And with danger came the reiterated need to justify myself: "The point is not to bypass academic rigor. (...) But scholarly discourse, an evolving set of conventions whose constraints I respect, condenses processes of thinking and feeling that may experiment in diverse forms" (Clifford, 1997: 12). Academic rigor, as an internalized self, can turn into rigor mortis when it comes to style of writing: a killer disease.

A parallel became to unravel as I wrote. On the one hand, my going deeper into the relationship between the crisis of representation in ethnography as thoroughly discussed by Marcus and Clifford, and attempts by documentary filmmakers to overcome such a crisis in their own language of expression: processes that have remained disconnected from each other, in a worrisome academic deafness or blindness. And on the other hand, my attempts at conciliating the practitioner with the academic in me, having started from a *concrete product* and going back to the *actual processes* from a theoretical point of departure. A double-binding process, and tension.

In his, as I've already noted, provoking discussion of the Bantu Kinema Educational Experiment, Feldman poses a question with which I would want to conclude. Hopefully, the reader will be left wondering about the frailties of representation, interpretation and point of view, and about the need for critical awareness, in reading *the world* and *the word*.

"Can we, for instance, say what or who is the subject of a film or set of films? To the African of 1935, the subject of the Experiment's films was his activity under colonial rule. To the contemporary African the films were about a historical era of exploitation. To the Experimenters, the films were a clear picture of the lives of those around them. And to the modern Western viewer, the subject would seem to be the idea of colonialism and the philosophy which it embodies. To us, that which appears to be documented is the colonizer's idealization of the life of the colonized. Indeed, considered from our point of view, the films are strikingly effective subject-generated pieces. The subjects must, of course, be seen as the White Experimenters, those people showing us their world. It is, undoubtably, an accurate picture" (Feldman, 1977: 35).

## ► AFTERWORD

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"Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine of social practices as "natural", and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things differently"

Terry Eagleton, *The significance of theory*, quoted by bell hooks

"Who speaks? Who listens? And why?"

bell hooks, *Teaching to transgress*, 1994

It is a sunny although still cold Sunday morning in Malmö as I write. I write to wrap up the process of writing, since for now I simply cannot take re-reading this work any more. Having read my final draft, Oscar Hemer, my tutor, has told me that he lacked, perhaps, more of the "personal": my personal reflection on the intercultural experience of making the documentaries; further clarity regarding my personal role in the filmmaking process. "It would add flavour", he said. More radical, Ann-Charlotte Ek, a teacher in the ComDev Master, said: "yes, the theory is clear. But what do you really want the reader to read in it?" Provokingly, she did not refer to the personal –my own writing– as somewhat lacking, but asked instead: "why is it hidden behind the theoretical?"

If asked for my own self-assessment of this essay, I would say that it is in the first place a much delayed exercise in documenting two key *processes* and *products* of my professional practice in the field. Also, I would term it as an exercise in identifying, analyzing and applying relevant theory from different fields to a topic of particular interest to me. I hope I have not merely shown that I do grasp the theory I discuss, but also somehow extended the general understanding of such theory, or opened the floor to discussion, by showing how it connects to my topic of interest.

The struggle with authorship –the search for my own voice or style of writing, being as I am a communication practitioner, a creative producer, a still somewhat reluctant academic wannabe– remains unsolved. I guess I will have to keep on writing.

Looking back into my trips to the field between 1997 and 2001 while *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* were in the making, the deepest feeling I recall, although the experiences seem too far away right now (the need to return to the field still lingering), is the realization of the fact that communication among human beings is fragile. Possible, yes. But fragile: it must be handled with care. Intense collaboration among people who are different, be them aware or unaware of their differences –always a painful, or at least an uncomfortable state, one way or the other– is also possible. Translation is an actual a dimension of communicating through differences. But we must remember that the possibility of translating goes hand in hand with the potential for misunderstandings.

As I became more and more a media producer, over the years, I started describing my work as such as one that "allows conditions of possibility". Although when I produce I am always thinking of "facilitating" as the keyword, which keeps me sanely connected to the educator in me, it has also become quite obvious over the years that issues of power must be dealt with as well. "Allowing conditions of visibility" is a closely related matter, and a crucial one.

How this completed stage –the essay submitted and examined, the Master course finished– relates to my future work will now slowly begin to show. On the while, despite the weariness that perhaps inevitably comes with experience (my latest production, a feature film with a USD 1,250,000 budget and two international co-producers, has just been released theatrically in my hometown, the city of Buenos Aires, and my feelings about the production process so far are really mixed-up), I hope I can remain connected to the child within me that does not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, and therefore does not see why we might not do things differently.

Malmö, May 15th 2005

## ► ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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As I wrap up this essay in Malmö, on may 15th 2005, I feel the need to express my gratitude to a group of persons without whom, in one or another way, arriving to this point would have been impossible. Many of them will not be able to read this work as it is, because they do not speak English. Hopefully I will manage to find an Argentine university interested in publishing a Spanish version of it, which would embark me in the most absurd writing adventure so far: translating myself to my mother tongue.



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## ► NOTES

1. The quote, belonging to an edition to Spanish of Todorov's book, has been translated to English. The book's title in Spanish, however, remains untranslated. Emilia Ferreiro argues that translation is the linguistic counterpart of diversity (Ferreiro, 1994). Following that point of view, it is my contention here that not every trace of other languages must be erased in translating.
2. Cinéma du Réel is organized since 1978 by the Bibliothèque publique d'information at the Centre Pompidou, in Paris, France. It is "a major appointment for documentary cinema", as described by its organizers.
3. Although the term adopted by the Master is "Project Work Final Report", and an appropriate alternative denomination could be "Master Thesis", I will refer to this work as an essay throughout the text. Some of my reasons for this choice will hopefully appear along the writing.
4. More recently, in May 2005, Candabare was last featured as part of the open seminars held by the Ibero-American Institute at Gothenburg University, Sweden.
5. When I say "our", I am referring to "us" participants in the 2002 edition of the Master in Communication for Development: a group of students from Scandinavia, Latin America, Africa and Asia. The 15 so-called "overseas students" in the ComDev 02 course, of which I was one, constituted a pilot group. All skilled professionals in the media and communication field, we were the first ones since the Master's creation to join Scandinavian students for an international edition of the course, taught in English as from then onwards. The expression "overseas students" referred I guess to the fact that we would have to cross one or the other sea (ocean) in order to reach Malmö University.
6. Eager on a standard idea(l) of what fieldwork should be, in november 2003 I developed a proposal and submitted it to the Componente de Atención a la Población Indígena (CAPI)-an Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) funded endeavor based in the Argentine Ministry of Social Development- requesting funding to undertake a qualitative evaluation-action research project, including crossed presentations of a series of four documentaries (see Note 7) in the four indigenous communities where they had been produced and the suburban towns adjacent to them, participating observation, and interviewing. My timing, however, was bad: after political, economical and social turmoil by the end of 2001 which led to the resignation of the then President De la Rúa and the election of a new President who came into power in 2003, and in the midst of critical renegotiations with the IMF, the World Bank, the IADB itself and private debtors, participatory communication actions in indigenous communities were simply not part of the Ministry's priorities, and much less of its budget. In June 2004 CAPI finally replied that they were not in a position to fund the proposal, but strongly suggested that I contact other potential funding sources and even volunteered a recommendation letter to add to the submission. If and when I obtain such funding, this essay will be revised to include selected aspects of that research. Hopefully, a new documentary will result from the process as well.
7. The series is composed by *Ayvu-Porã/The beautiful words* (1998), *Ayllus/The people* (1999), *Candabare/Late summer celebration* (2001) and *Pilcomayo/Likely encounters* (2003). All of them, © cruzdelsur zona audiovisual, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Versions with English subtitles of both *Ayvu-Porã* and *Candabare* were introduced to ComDev02 students attending Seminar 4 in Malmö in may 2003 and are available for teaching purposes at Malmö University's library. Also, as mentioned above, *Ayvu-Porã/The beautiful words* (1998) was part of the Digital Bauhaus exhibition which opened at the Roskilde Museum of Modern Art in January 2004, and is available at the Museum's videolibrary.
8. See Ruby, Jay (1991) for a discussion of the connection between allowing participation of the subjects and recovering voice in terms of authorship in documentary-making.
9. Additionally, I intend to edit a (very) short film, sort of a conceptual clip intended as an audiovisual opening to the essay, aimed at reminding the reader that it is in audiovisual material, and points of view, that this whole discussion is based; and also an educational aid, if the contents of this essay were to be discussed in a seminar. As from my re-vision of *Ayvu* and *Candabare*, plus two quotes from feature films found in literature reviewed for this essay (*Crocodile Dundee*, directed by Peter Faiman in 1986, and *The Passenger*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni in 1975), I will re-edit selected fragments of both in connection to the keywords (Williams, 1985) that I framed and discussed to theoretically ground this essay. Due to budgetary and other practical restrictions, I will only be able to proceed with the editing once I return to Buenos Aires. The piece will be submitted as a "coda" to this essay.
10. Please contact cruzdelsurprod@ciudad.com.ar for VHS or DVD copies with English subtitles.
11. Throughout the essay, italics will be used in some cases to indicate that I am adopting, in the context of a phrase of my own, expressions excerpted from literature quoted in the essay.
12. Tamanduá, province of Misiones, Argentina: the indigenous village where *Ayvu-Porã/The beautiful words* was shot. Libertador Gral. San Martín, province of Jujuy, Argentina: the town and main location in which the production of *Candabare/Late summer celebration* was based. Malmö University, Malmö, Sweden: where the Master in Communication for development is based. My living-room: in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina. See map (page 30).
13. In particular, Cecilia Flachsland used *Candabare* as educational material with a group of high-school students in Buenos Aires in 2003, part of a course on "Communication and Media". The written analyses of the documentary submitted by participants in the workshop, which she generously shared with me, could serve as the basis of a study of film reception in classroom settings, or students as audiences.
14. I guess the way in which mainstream international documentary film festivals, such as the Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival for instance, define the validity or not of materials that can be submitted in terms of their date of production, not allowing documentaries older than their respective last yearly editions to participate, was somehow interfering as well with my ability to see value in terms of their communicational or educational relevance in these materials.
15. See Note 5.
16. I intentionally draw here on Walter Benjamin's terms (Benjamin, 1986), although an in-depth discussion of his work as related to the production of the two documentaries under review exceeds the scope of this essay.
17. Self-irony: me, the "overseas" student, discussing, in the context of this "international" setting -the ComDev Master-, documentary portraits of two indigenous communities lost inland somewhere in the North West of Argentina, almost invisible -or irrelevant, and the connection between one and the other remains a relevant one as regards the field of Communication for Development- for my own fellow citizens: the Argentine national public opinion, if such an entity actually exists.
18. Concept mapping, developed in the 1960s by Joseph D. Novak, is a technique for visually representing the structure of information - how concepts within a domain are interrelated. According to Novak, "Meaningful learning involves the assimilation of new concepts and propositions into existing cognitive structures" (Novak, 1984). His work is based on Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning which stresses that learning new knowledge is dependent on what is already known. More specifically, new knowledge gains meaning when it can be substantively related to a framework of existing knowledge.
19. As I've discussed elsewhere, "'Reading the word', Freire shows us, is dependent upon 'reading the world'". Critical literacy "...enables us to more fully read and to transform (to write) the world, to recognize injustice, to create democracy in collective struggle against the forces that oppress and marginalize the lives of the poor, of racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and of women and men throughout society" (Engel, 2002). The commitment to more fully read and transform (write) the world as understood by Freire ought to be, in my view, a principle guiding the work of practitioners in the field of communication for development. And most definitely a principle guiding the education and training of such practitioners.
20. And in that sense, it is sad that an actual conversation between Williams and Freire never took place. A critical confrontation, potentially a theoretical counterpoint, of their works regarding television and the word respectively, is a pending intellectual task.
21. I would want to call the readers' attention again to the fact that English is not my native language, but the language of the Master.

22. Although it can be said that both *Ayvü-Porä* and *Candabare* were developed at local community levels, the actual interaction between the documentary crews and members of the indigenous communities took place in most cases at group level. And prior experience of some sort, either shooting, developing research or teaching-actual experience communicating with groups in the field- was key when it came to facing the unexpected, attempting to understand it, and making decisions on the spot.

23. Silvio Waisbord's "Family tree of theories, methodologies and strategies in development communication" prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation (2000), Jan Servaes' "Approaches to Development Communication" commissioned by UNESCO (2002), or the very recent "e-Forum on Measuring the Impact of Communication in Development Projects and Programs" (2005) sponsored by The World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Communication Initiative (CI) and the Department for International Development (DFID) being examples.

24. In an interview with Warren Feek in 1998, Denise Grey, Director of the Communications Division at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York, USA, exposed this quite clearly when asked about the main elements of her division's work: "We do strategic communications (...). We focus our strategic communication in three areas. The first is what you might expect from the Communication Department of any international organisation -maintaining and enhancing the image and reputation of the Foundation. We do that through media relations, the annual report, generic publications, promotion and publicity of activities, fellowships, competitions and other activities that the Foundation undertakes. In that piece of work we are also beginning to think about how we might more proactively tell the story of the contributions of a foundation like ours to world society" (Feek, 1998).

25. As I have discussed elsewhere (Engel, 2002), this was the situation as well in 2001: the final report of a Euro-American Donor Seminar on Communication and Development hosted by DANIDA in June of that year characterized communication as a low priority within donor agencies. "There seems... to be a general lack of commitment to the importance of communication for development. Communication programmes and projects tend to be small, dispersed and under-funded, which inhibits adequate impact within the field... There is in turn a tendency for communication to be an 'add on' or complement to other programmes rather than as a central development issue". Add communication and stir, as in Pieterse's "add culture and stir", or the failure to reproblemate development" (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001: 68).

26. As well as his choice of the terms "agree" and "consensus" in the same sentence, I might add...

27. "Participatory approaches gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s and have evolved into a rich field standing in stark contrast to models and theories of the first development decades. In fact, scholars have noted that few contemporary development projects -regardless of theoretical orientation- are conducted without some sort of participatory component, even if this notion is honored more on paper than in practice (Ascroft & Masilela 1994; Fraser & Restrepo -Estrada, 1998; Mato, 1999; White S., 1994)" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 140). "Authentic participation directly addresses power and its distribution in society, and usually authorities do not want to upset the status quo, even if they pay lip service to participation" (Balit, 2004: 16). "There is need to create an alternative framework for communication interventions, that is truly people and participation oriented, and not only on paper" (Balit, 2004: 5).

28. Particularly as regards the 1980s, which might be indicating the relevance of taking a closer look to what was happening in the field back then.

29. More aware than ever of the difficulty of introducing oneself as coming from, located in, belonging to, a different part of the world (not the First, but the Third), referring to me as a "Latin American" soon became a joke between me and the Swede I happened to fall in love with while taking the Master course. On a more serious note, I later found that that kind of jokes, indicating both a critical awareness of a deeply rooted political, social problem and a sense of humour to deal with it in personal interaction, was a feature of daily life among students involved in Third World development studies in The Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, as studied by Shanti George in *Third World Professionals & Development Education in Europe* (1997).

30. Power and its distribution in society. Power relationships. Power to the people. Huesca recalls that "(...) recent research has focused explicitly on power and conceptualized it in a nuanced and problematic

way. For the most part, power has been theorized as both multi-centered -not one dimensional- and asymmetrical (Servaes, 1996c; Tehranian, 1999). This role acknowledges the force of institutions and structures, but emphasizes the role of human agency in reproducing and transforming them (Tehranian, 1999). Within this generalized framework of power, participatory communication is seen by some as being a potential source of social transformation (Nair & White, 1994a; Riaño, 1994) (...)While mindful of the asymmetrical characteristics of power in society, these positions are generally optimistic regarding the prospects of transformation via participatory communication (...) Less optimistic are scholars who see participation as either insufficient or problematic in and of itself in terms of altering power relationships in society. For these scholars, participatory communication may be helpful in attaining structural transformations in the land tenure, political, or economic arrangements of society, which are viewed as the root sources of subordination (Hedebro, 1982; Lozare, 1994; Nerfin, 1977). As such, participatory communication is necessary but not sufficient for engaging and altering power relationships" (Huesca in Servaes, II, 2002: 159-160).

31. "Ownership is a step beyond accessibility; it means asking ourselves to whom the information ultimately belongs, and who has a say as its repository and use" (Einsiedel in Richards, Thomas and Nain, 2001: 101)

32. For a discussion of the meaning of hope in this context, see Freire (1993).

33. In this sense, during the seminar "Communication for Development, in Practice", held in Copenhagen in April 2005 and organized by Thomas Tufte, I was stricken by one of the guest speakers' response when she was asked by a student about the ways in which her organization was evaluating the achievement of behavioural change that the program in progress she was referring to was seeking. She said, unaware: "I don't know. It is up to the researchers to help us find methods to assess behaviour change".

34. Raymond Williams' "structure of feeling" would be the notion I would resort to, to further explore such atmosphere.

35. Yes, the reader has read correctly: almost half of the country's population below the poverty line. Or to use the bare, actual term: poor.

36. These dynamics, like concentric circles, or Chinese boxes, also applied to relationships between the crews and provincial representatives, and inhabitants of neighboring towns and the indigenous communities.

37. When I say "trajectories", I am thinking in terms of production, but also of dissemination/distribution and reception/audience. Although these aspects will not be explored in full here, it is my contention that they must all be taken into account if the study of concrete media products is to be theoretically productive.

38. The street interviews to "non-indigenous" people living in the same areas than the indigenous communities portrayed in *Candabare* are a striking example of this invisibility.

39. Both documentaries were funded in distinctively different ways, which I will describe in detail later. And as the reader will see, it could be argued that *Candabare* was not an independent production, since it was commissioned. However, it was, in the sense that we kept the full right to decide the final cut, that once approved the production budget became our responsibility -we agreed to deliver a finished version for a closed overall budget which we would administer, for better or worse- and that the documentary's dissemination depended completely on our voluntary work.

40. I call the reader's attention to UNESCO's definition of the "democratization of communication," defined in agreement in 1980 as "the process in which 1) an individual becomes an active element, and not a mere object of communication; 2) the variety of messages exchanged constantly increases; 3) the degree and quality of social representation in communication also increases" (Rossi, 2000).

41. The category in which the two documentaries discussed here should be inscribed.

42. For one of many discussions in progress regarding the Argentine documentary see Kriger, 2004.

43. The cost of a ticket to the movies is ARS 9, while the legal minimum wage for a worker is ARS 450.

44. This quote, which opens *Ayvü-Porä*, was Vanessa's leitmotiv when she first drafted her proposal to the Fundación Antorchas.

45. After completing the editing, we had only managed to set apart enough cash for a three days final trip to Misiones, and once again had secured the support of the province's Educational TV System, which was to provide transport, and the province's Secretariat of Culture, which was

to provide food and lodging but also the technical equipment to show the documentary in Tamanduá. However, a quite unlucky combination of heavy rain, which had rendered the path into the community almost impassable by the time we got there, plus the marked lack of collaboration of the Mayor of 25 de Mayo, the vicinity closest to the community, who said he had not been informed by the Secretariat of Culture of our plans and refused to help in any way, made it impossible for us to accomplish our wish. Being only 25 km away from the community, we had to turn around and return to the city of Misiones.

**46.** Here, as in the documentary's credits, "white" and indigenous cameramen and camerawomen are listed together, in alphabetical order, as members of a same crew.

**47.** In July 2004 the foundation announced that it would close its operations, creating a void in terms of funding alternatives for the arts and sciences in Argentina.

**48.** Although not a specific need belonging to our production budget, the then wife of the Argentine football star Diego Maradona donated a brand new football and eleven football shirts, something that the men in the community had asked for when we discussed the possibility of trying to get them things they needed that would be within our range of possibilities, after they had attempted to convince us to get them a horse...

**49.** Musical talent, in particular, agreed to record the original version of "Canto del Río Uruguay" for no fee. All they got from us was a free ride to the studio, and an invitation to lunch after we had finished recording. A national university in the province of Buenos Aires guaranteed a state of the art studio and a studio operator for that recording. On the other hand, the photographer we invited to the main field trip, with whom we thought we had agreed—since we did not put that agreement in writing, a point came in which things turned into "I said, you said"—that we would cover all his expenses during the trip and grant him the right to use the photographs he made as material author, although not the holder of the copyright, claimed at some point ownership of the negatives, in an upsetting episode that led me to take a course in authorship and copyrights.

**50.** The problem of voluntary work in the field of culture—an element that must be pointed out here, as related to the risk of communication of development practitioners internalizing the fact that their work is underpaid—has been researched by Uruguayan researcher Hugo Achugar. On a different but somehow related note, our crew in *Ayvú-Porã* was already far from Rouch's ideal: underpaid because of budgetary constraints, and still not able to extend its presence in the field to more than the essential minimum: "Finally, and this is without a doubt the decisive factor, the ethnographer must spend a long time in the field before beginning to shoot. This period of reflection, apprenticeship, and mutual awareness might be quite long (Flaherty spent a year in the Solomons before rolling a foot of film), and is thus incompatible with the schedules and salaries of a crew of technicians" (Rouch, 1974: 40).

**51.** In her first attempt to find a producer, Vanessa pitched her project to an independent production company that had been one of the most relevant in the field of documentary-making in Argentina as related to the return of democracy. To her surprise, and perhaps because of the ambiguities posed by the need to economically sustain a structure in a context of scarce funding and income opportunities, this company strongly suggested that she use a miniDV camera herself, but provide a cheaper (which means also older and with less image and sound quality...) camera to the members of the community.

**52.** And the three of us with at least some experience in one way or other in feminist endeavors, an element I want to state although its influence, if any, on our fieldwork, cannot be explored here.

**53.** See Note 45.

**54.** Our camping in the school did not exactly please the white teachers, two women, with a strong Catholic missionary background, who I guess felt the community was their own, and saw us as some kind of invaders. But we decided on the spot that our longest stay would take place during the school summer holidays, and therefore we didn't bump into them then.

**55.** "We wondered how they would look at their world and what things they would choose to photograph. This was a community that has electrical power, a satellite dish and a few TV sets; so they have access to the images of Brazilian TV, but they don't use mirrors in their homes, which is why we had the feeling that maybe we were putting forward a paradox. Seeing oneself. Seeing. And in a single move, showing, showing oneself. Because we would develop the pictures in Buenos

Aires and then we would take them back to the community, the question was: were they conscious that we would see what they photographed, even if it portrayed situations that were kept out of the white man's sight? The underlying question was: should we warn them? White guilt. There is a traditional proverb that goes that indigenous people believe that photographs take away the soul of the person being photographed. Who knows. Maybe in its original version the saying did not refer to the mechanism (photography, or in our case, video) but to the performer (the photographer or video maker)" (Engel, 1999).

**56.** Since in the making of *Ayvú-Porã* we interacted mostly, if not only, with men, we still wonder, sometimes, if women living in those households took pictures at all.

**57.** I would point out that, to the surprise of established anthropologists from Misiones, for the first time ever, as far as their records allow to confirm, white people with cameras were allowed to witness and register a ceremony inside the "opy-gua", their ceremonial house.

**58.** When the time to edit *Candabare* came, I was on the one hand much more experienced, and therefore intervened much more strongly in every discussion. Also because I felt that *Candabare* was not directly the result of Vanessa's seeking for funding to direct an idea, but rather the result of what was by then a shared body of work... Egos and other very mundane issues involved in film production are brought up by Horace Newcomb and Amanda Lotz in their article on "The production of media fiction" (Jensen, 2002).

**59.** The sound recordist and mixer was part of the crew during the main field trip, and he was granted stock to record additional sounds and voices; he was also invited to the editing room while the director and the editor were at work; and like almost everything else in the post-production process, decisions were deeply discussed among the core group that constituted the crew. Sound editing was yet another lock down, during which felt like endless nights. "Sound editing (background, speech, music) is undoubtedly as complex as picture editing" (Rouch, 1974: 42).

**60.** It is interesting to note that even if we were obviously thinking of the TV as a potential outlet at some level, at least in terms of technical format, all along the shooting we never considered the need of obtaining signed release forms from the participating members of the community, which are nowadays a must to even dream of selling a piece to a broadcaster.

**61.** As Argentinean psycholinguistic Emilia Ferreiro states in her paper "Diversity and literacy process: from celebration to awareness": "It is clear that very few times a "term to term" translation is possible, and that translation engenders its own miscommunication spaces (because linguistic differences are intimately linked to cultural differences). Misunderstandings exist, as much as the possibility of translating. It is that duplicity that interests me, because it seems to me that linguistic difficulties exemplify in an exemplary way similar cultural difficulties, in general" (1994).

**62.** When we were almost ready, and worried in particular about the chieftain's impossible Spanish, we showed a copy of the editing draft to who was back then our strategic consultant in the development of our small independent production company. The combination of her strong marketing background, and the uneasiness she experimented when he could not understand Duarte, drove her first reaction and recommendation: "You must subtitle this". And although we liked her and respected her, and she has been over the years instrumental in many decisions we've made, the director and I nodded at each other upon her words, and silently agreed on the need to not subtitle.

**63.** In his 1974 article Rouch states that written support materials, adding to the viewing of a film as a learning experience, should be provided in every case: "In this case the film can be no more than an open door to this science, those who want to know more can refer to a pamphlet, which, like the exemplary "ethnographic companion to films" (modular publications) should henceforth accompany all ethnographic films" (Rouch, 1974: 42).

**64.** We arrived to the community at a time in which the physical territory was being progressively urbanized, the communal spaces were being turned into private ones, and the indigenous ways were being met by a very strong Evangelist church seeking for new converts... and even if we had the chance to travel to the community by the end of the process to share the completed documentary with them, it was bad luck again: while our trip had been planned in advance, in the midst of an electoral campaign at the last minute the province's Governor decided to pay a visit to the community, and of course almost no one paid attention to us while

he was there in person, a one and only chance to claim for their many needs.

**65.** For current quotes of the average cost per minute of non-fiction for broadcast, see "Real Screen" magazine, <http://www.realscreen.com>

**66.** This sentence strikes me as I re-read it, and although it definitely exceeds the aims of this paper, it makes me wonder about the kind of wrongful thinking that might be at the very base of personal attitudes eventually leading to corruption. I do not mean to say that this was our case: we simply did not want to be underpaid, since we were being hired to work, and not volunteering a project of our own; and our budgeting of the documentary remained tight and in accordance to actual production needs, with our fees as director and producer in line with what everybody else in the crew was paid, still less than the average recommended for feature films. But there is something about the very structure of the sentence that lets off an alarm regarding how the process of "selling one's soul to the devil", or being co-opted, might work at a personal level.

**67.** Who turned out to be an unexpected contingency: appointed by CAPI, he was truly an expert on roads in the area. But at the same time, he thought that men knew better than women, and also that older people knew better than young people, two elements which made his relationship with us, younger women, quite difficult. Also, because of his very religious background, he had a way of thinking about the indigenous communities as in need of salvation that was far from ours. And to make it worse, his background as a teacher added to his compulsion to preach constantly about what to do. We had a hard time dealing with his interference all through the production process.

**68.** The kind of economic pressure I refer to in Note 51 was beginning to have an impact on our own structure.

**69.** The words of the head of the Misiones Educational TV System, an anthropologist, when she had tried to comfort us many years back, after our failed attempt to reach Tamanduá under heavy rain, came back to mind then, still a puzzle: "when you are out in the field, you can never, ever, rely on things to stay the way they seem to be".

**70.** The question of what to do, had they been strongly dissatisfied with what they saw, remained up to then an unspoken fear.

**71.** According to Rouch, "It is this aspect of fieldwork that marks the uniqueness of the ethnographic filmmaker: instead of elaborating and editing his notes after returning from the field, he must, under penalty of failure, make his synthesis at the exact moment of observation. In other words, he must create his cinematic report, bending it or stopping it, at the time of the event itself. There is no such thing here as writing cuts in advance, or fixing the order of sequences" (Rouch, 1974: 41).

**72.** A quite paradoxical request, inasmuch we were actually hired to work for the communication component of a development project.

**73.** Although I have found Ruby's article very useful in terms of my overall discussion, I want to quote here a remark he makes which I find worrisome -and that would merit a whole discussion in itself given its inclusion in the text- regarding the difficulty of surrendering, as an academic expert, or a scientist, the position of authority long granted by the institutions which administer knowledge: "The move to give greater voice and authority to the subject has now reached a logical but extreme point. There is an unspoken assumption about the validity of interviews, particularly with those outside the mainstream. These films seem to suggest that what subjects say about themselves and their situation is to be taken at face value. While it is clear that the balance needs redressing and the victims of Western oppression should represent themselves, it should not be assumed that any one group has a privileged insight into its own history. People seldom understand their own motivation. No particular group of people has the corner on being self-serving or adjusting the past to fit the needs of the present. To assume otherwise denies the role of the unconsciousness. What people say about themselves are data to be interpreted, not the truth" (Ruby, 1991: 54).

**74.** It could be said that there is a line connecting both *Ayvupo* and *Candabare* which goes from intending to share the cameras to "film "without awareness" ("seizing improvised life")", like Vertov did, to staging reality, or "the staging of "real life"[.] as did Flaherty" (Rouch, 1974: 38).

**75.** Also, Rouch makes an effort to define his own work as a synthesis of both Flaherty's and Vertov's approaches: "For me then, the only way to film is to walk with the camera, taking it where it is most effective and improvising another type of ballet wit it, trying to make it as alive as the people it is filming. I consider this dynamic improvisation to be a first synthesis of Vertov's "ciné-eye" and Flaherty's "participating camera" (Rouch, 1974: 41).

**76.** Ruby however notes and regrets the fact that "Unfortunately, he has never made explicit the extent of his collaborations" (Ruby, 1992: 57).

**77.** Also, debate regarding the embellishment of pain, as aroused by Oliviero Toscani's campaigning for Benetton over the years, and as discussed by Susan Sontag in *On photography*, drawing a line with both Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin, was part of our concerns.

**78.** In the words of Rouch's translator: "The French is "partagé" which I have translated as "shared"; the full sense of "partager" is actually "to share by dividing in equal halves". The point of view Rouch is speaking of is roughly similar to what is called "self-reflexive" anthropology in the States".

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*Ayvü-Porä's* leitmotiv photographed by Luis Timisky.

*Candabare's* leitmotiv photographed by Andrea Cipelli.

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